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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Degree DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Title of Thesis JOHN FRITH (1503-1533) and HIS RELATION TO THE ORIGIN
OF THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

The Melancthon of the English Reformation, John Frith, was born at Seven Oaks, Kent in 1503. His education was acquired at Eton and Cambridge where he distinguished himself as a learned scholar. When Wolsey was looking for promising young scholars to occupy the chairs at Cardinal College, Oxford, he chose Frith as one, little realizing that Frith had already been converted by Tyndale whom he had met in 1522. Frith, along with other Cambridge men, organized an evangelical group similar to but more definitely Protestant than the White Horse Inn "theological society" at Cambridge.

^{in Oxford} The Cambridge students infiltrated Protestant views and books, so zealously that the authorities became alarmed and imprisoned Frith and the chief instigators. After the death of a few prisoners, Wolsey released Frith on promise that he would remain within ten miles of Oxford. But Frith fled to the Continent where he joined Tyndale. He helped Tyndale in his work and translated Luther's Revelation of Antichrist and Patrick's Places. His first original writing was a treatise on purgatory which refuted the writings on the subject by Sir Thomas More, John Rastel, and John Fisher. Although married and secure on the Continent, he ventured twice to return to his native country. During Lent of 1531 he landed in England ostensibly for the purpose of giving first hand assistance to those working for reform. While seeking the Prior of Reading, Frith was arrested as a vagabond. In desperation he called for the local schoolmaster and discoursed at length with him in Latin and Greek. The schoolmaster secured his release and Frith fled to Antwerp.

Frith made his second and last return to England in 1532. His mission to strengthen the brethren in the faith was cut short by his arrest and imprisonment in the Tower of London. There, in spite of severe limitations he wrote several treatises. Besides a treatise on baptism and a few minor works, he wrote a rejoinder to John Rastel whom he converted to Protestantism. His lengthy treatise on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper was written in reply to Thomas More who had attacked a short treatise by Frith. In this Frith successfully refuted More's views.

Although Cromwell and Cranmer were reluctant to have Frith tried, the King was incited by one of his chaplains to demand his trial. Accordingly, Frith was examined at Croydon by Cranmer who, failing to obtain Frith's recantation, sent him to Stokesley, Bishop of London. On June 20, 1533 he was tried at St. Paul's and found guilty of holding Protestant views of purgatory and the Lord's Supper. However, he was condemned for refusing to grant the doctrines of purgatory and transubstantiation as articles of faith. He became the first and only martyr for the cause of toleration, and on July 4, 1533 he was burned at the stake.

The history and theology of the English Reformation bear the marks of Frith's influence. From 1533 to 1555, Frith's works were reprinted and eagerly read by the common people and their spiritual leaders. Cranmer, who was influenced by Frith, had a major part in forming the theological formulae of the Church of England. The writers of the Thirty-Nine Articles rejected the doctrine of purgatory, which Frith was first to deny, and adopted Frith's view of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. A lasting tribute to Frith's influence remains in the Book of Common Prayer which contains his own words: "And as



concerning the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is against the truth of Christ's true natural body, to be in more places than in one at one time."

Although only thirty years old, John Frith left an indelible mark on the making of the English Reformation.

JOHN FRITH
(1503-1533)
and
His Relation to the Origin
of the
Reformation in England

ROBERT ERNEST FULOP, B.S., B.D.

Dissertation
for
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In all past ages and preceding days,
Heaven (to His honour and eternal praise)
Hath never left His church yet destitute
of faithful witnesses, both to dispute,
And die, too, for His spotless verity,
(If call'd thereto,) with all sincerity,
And admirable fortitude of mind.
In which rare roll of martyrs we do find
Famous John Frith, an Englishman by nation;
Who, from his youth, adorn'd his education
With promptitude of wit, and other parts,
Whereby he flourish'd both in tongues and arts.
And, to conclude, let all rejoice and say,
Religion was Frith's prop, and he her stay.

Thomas Fuller, Abel Redevivus
or The Dead Yet Speaking, I, 141.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their testimony; and they
loved not their lives unto the death."

Revelation 12:11

"...the man was ientle and quyet and wel lerned
and better shuld haue ben yf he had liued."

A testimony to Frith by George Joye in
An Apology to W. Tindale, p. 33

The following works of reference have been denoted by abbreviations:

C.S.	Camden Society Publications
D.N.B.	Dictionary of National Biography
E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society
Foxe, A. and M.	Acts and Monuments
L. and P. Henry VIII	Letters and State Papers of Henry VIII
P.S.	Parker Society Publications
V.C.H.	The Victoria County Histories
W.E.	The Weimar Edition of the works of Luther

Frith, Works

Russell's edition of Works of the English Reformers is used unless otherwise stated.

More, Works

Rastell's edition used.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

One of the many controversial historical subjects has been the English Reformation. Some have seen in the machinations of Henry VIII and the gentry a greedy seizure of wealth at the expense of the Roman Church. Others have stressed the results of the Parliaments as the cause of the Reformation. But there have always been those historians who have stressed the deep religious movement which originated and stubbornly supported the reformatory measures of Parliament and King.

It was popular, however, during the first three decades of our century to minimize the early religious impetus. It was thought, for instance, that the Lollards were extinct on the eve of the Reformation. Gairdner was not as extreme in his judgment, but he concluded that the Lollard movement, although not extinct, was nevertheless, too weak to exert any influence on the Reformation.¹ But the researches of G. M. Trevelyan, England in the Age of Wycliffe, H. Maynard Smith, Pre-Reformation England and the latest effort by E. G. Rupp, English Protestant Tradition have demonstrated conclusively that there was an active group of people who doctrinally were awaiting a Reformation in England. These Lollards or "known men", far from extinct, were galvanized into a religiously militant group and formed fertile soil for the seed of the

1. Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation.

Reformation.

John Frith's relationship and dependence upon this group of religious deviators should not be underestimated. But his contribution was over and above the Lollard movement and consequently he deserves independent notice and research. He was not another imitator as George Joye among the Reformers of the time.¹ Rather he was an original thinker and contributor to the early Reformation movement in England.

Why Frith has not been the subject of more writers is a mystery to this author. Perhaps the reason lies in the attitude of Tyndale's biographers who unintentionally tended to reduce Frith to the stature of Tyndale's office boy. Very little attention has been given to his doctrinal thought and the influence it had over Reformation thought. Then too, because of Frith's youth, few historians thought there would be anything worthy of notice in one who faced the stake at thirty years of age.

But with the recent interest in the English Protestant Tradition as a basic factor in understanding the English Reformation, it is time Frith is given his proper niche in the hall of Reformation leaders. However, it may be objected that although no volume or monograph

1. Smith in his Tudor Prelates and Politics, p. 151, refers to Frith as the "...friend and disciple of Foxe's protégé, George Joye". This is one of several inaccurate statements made by recent historians. Smith also calls Frith a "pseudo-Protestant", but anyone familiar with Frith's writings would come to no such conclusion.

was ever attempted, yet articles do appear in the Diction-ary of National Biography, Gairdner's Lollardy and the Reformation, and H. Maynard Smith's Henry VIII and the English Reformation. The D.N.B. article is outdated and contains much erroneous information. Gairdner's account is biased from the traditionalist standpoint and relies almost exclusively on Frith's enemies for his information.^{ITS} Maynard Smith's article promises better things, but he retains not a little prejudice against these early Reformers. His account, however, is the fullest and most accurate. E.G. Rupp touches upon Frith, but because of the very nature of his work, he could not present a detailed study of him.

^{THE PRESENT WRITER}

This author is aware that the temptation to magnify Frith's importance has been difficult to resist; but an honest attempt at keeping Frith in balance has been the guiding principle. The purpose of presenting Frith as he was, and especially in the manner in which he contributed to a doctrinal reform, has been the primary aim throughout the work. Therefore, it is thought proper to include only those aspects of secular history, for example Parliament's and the King's actions, which directly bear on the subject. The general history of the Reformation and numerous biographies of Cranmer, Latimer, Bilney and others already have been written. Only what is directly related to Frith is included in this monograph. To this end the author has attempted to fulfil the prophecy con-

4

tained on the fly leaf of Frith's books, "Dead men shall
live again", and Frith lives on!

PART I

THE LIFE OF JOHN FRITH

CHAPTER I

EVANGELICAL ROOTS

CHAPTER I

EVANGELICAL ROOTS

^{N6}
 Any treatment of the life of John Frith can (ill) afford ^D to ignore the evangelical background a half century before the Reformation. During this period forces were at work which profoundly influenced the Reformers both negatively, by providing fertile ground for the seed of the Reformation, and positively, by collaborating with men of like opinion to subsidize scholars and to disseminate their books and opinions throughout England.

"PROTESTANTS" BEFORE THE REFORMATION

Among the burning questions of the day posed by many 16th century traditionalists was, "Where were you Protestants before the Reformation?" Foxe answered by pointing to the group which he aptly termed "the secret multitude of true professors"¹- these were the "Protestants" before the Reformation. They maintained and at times furiously fanned the smoldering fire, the sparks of which originated with Wycliffe. These successors of Wycliffe constantly attacked the excesses of the Church with the usual result that the Church hunted and prosecuted them with remarkable efficiency.

Lollardy had reached the zenith of its strength under the able and influential leadership of Sir John Oldcastle. But in 1414 Henry V surprised and dispersed some twenty thousand of his followers in St. Giles in the Fields,

1. Foxe, A. and M., IV, 218.

just outside of London. Although Oldcastle escaped and lived undetected for a short time, Lollardy suffered a blow from which it never recovered. The higher class adherents no longer supported Lollardy and from henceforth Lollardy drew its support from the lower classes of working men whose influence on society was meager, except in some local areas.

The civil wars, however, helped the spread of Lollardy, for the energies of the Church and Crown were consumed in the struggle over the throne. With the coming of Henry VII, the Lollards began to increase in numbers and under bishops such as William Smith of Lincoln, they enjoyed a measure of freedom in propagating their views. It was not, however, a period without some investigations, for in 1499 the ambassador Raimondo de Soncino wrote from London to Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan that a new sect of heretics believed "...that baptism is unnecessary for the offspring of Christians, that marriage is a superfluous... and that the sacrament of the altar is untrue", but he adds, "...the prelates have commenced persecuting them."¹ The fortunes of the Lollards from 1500 on rose and sank almost in proportion to the severity of the bishops' investigations.

Although the "secret multitude of true professors" were Lollards, it is not strictly correct to label them with the old name. For the name "Lollard" was fast becoming synonymous with the term "heretic" and included all religious malcontents. The term "Lollard" was used in

1. The Venetian Calendar, I, 285, paper 799.

much the same sense in England as "Anabaptist" was used on the continent - a general term for religious, social and political radicals. It is more correct to refer to them by the name they called themselves. Foxe says they were called the "known men" or the "just-fast-men" after the "Great Abjuration" of 1506.¹ These "known men" were numerous throughout Kent, Essex and the Thames Valley area, especially throughout the area of the Chiltern Hills. The main urban centers of the "known men" were London, Amersham and Colchester. So numerous were they in these areas that they caused grave concern to the ecclesiastical powers. But they were never of sufficient strength throughout England to form a formidable underground movement.

One of the most concentrated and popular areas of the "known men" was the town of Amersham situated in south Buckinghamshire among the Chiltern Hills. In numbers the "known men" grew considerably and they became careless in their conduct; for around 1506 the results of an episcopal investigation caused three of their leaders to be arrested and put to death. At the death of one of the leaders, William Tylsworth, Foxe tells us that about sixty "known men" bore faggots.² That the number of the group may have been much greater is attested by Thomas Holmes who was "detected" under Longland, for saying that after

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 218. The term "known men" was, however used before, for Reginald Pecock mentions it and attributes it to their claim to "know" Scripture and to their interpretation of I Cor. XIV:8 "If any man knoweth he shall be unknown." R. Pecock, Repressor of the Clergy, Rolls Series, 19, I, 53.

2. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 123.

the "Great Abjuration" (1506) "...the greatest cobs were yet behind."¹ About the same time Richard White was turned over to Longland for saying these words after the death of Bishop Smith, Longland's predecessor: "My Lord that is dead, was a good man, and divers known-men were called before him, and he sent them home again, bidding them that they should live among their neighbours as good Christian men should do."²

Again in 1521 the "known men" of Amersham and the surrounding territories in Bishop Longland's diocese were subjected to another investigation. Some two hundred are mentioned by Foxe to have abjured with at least one death, that of John Scrivener.³ The register of Lincoln dated 1530, however, reveals the fact that the "known men" were still active and perhaps more confident than before since the name of Luther and the success of the Continental Reformation became known in England.

About the same period the "known men" were represented in London, especially in the streets north of Cheapside.⁴ Fitzjames, Bishop of London, began a heresy hunt at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign and clashed with certain "known men" such as Richard Hun, a member of the Merchant Tailor's Company and the most controversial

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 227.

2. Ibid., IV, 227.

3. See Foxe, op. cit., IV, 221-240 for Longland's Register.

4. Jeffries Davies - London - V.H.C. p. 247.

name of the period immediately before the Reformation. "Old Father Hacker" was another chief teacher in London. Stacey was said to have kept a man in his house "...to write the Apocalypse in English", while John Sercot, a grocer, assumed the expense of the project.¹ Between 1509 and 1527 there were forty "known men" who, according to Foxe, abjured in the diocese of London. Two of these, Sweeting and Brewster, were burnt as relapsed heretics in 1511. On the eighth of November, 1511, Henry VIII's secretary, Ammonius, wrote a letter to Erasmus in which he doubtless exaggerated the frequency of burnings; nevertheless he attested the growth of the "known men".

I do not wonder that the price of faggots has gone up, for many heretics furnish a daily holocaust, and yet more spring up to take their place. And, so please you, the brother of my man Thomas- more a stick than a man- has not only started a sect, but has disciples.²

Although the "known men" were not without converts in London, they were not strong, since their main centers were in Essex instead of London.³

Of particular interest to the biographer of Frith are the activities of the "known men" in Kent. Very little is known of them because they were seldom subjected to episcopal investigations, and therefore, they do not appear in the registers. However, when Archbishop Warham assumed his office at Canterbury, one of his first tasks

1. L. and P., ^{Henry VIII} IV, 4029.

2. Allen, ^(ed) Opus Epistolarum Des Erasmi, I, No. 239.

3. Jeffries Davies, op. cit., p. 255.

was to stop the growth of unchecked heresies. In 1511 a commission was appointed to try heretics in the diocese of Canterbury. One of the judges, curiously enough, was Colet, who had been drawing the "known men" to his lectures at St. Paul's Cathedral.¹ The condemned were William Carder and Agnes Grebil of Tenterden, Robert Harrison of Halden, John Browne of Ashford, and Edward Walker of Maidstone. Of this group Agnes Grebil perhaps met with the worst fate. She had been converted to the views of the "known men" "...about the end of King Edward the Fourth's days" in the house and by the teaching of John Ive. Evidently the "known men" were of long standing in Kent. What is unusual in the case of this sexagenarian is that after denying her guilt, she was condemned on the testimony of her husband and two sons. The register contains the following record of their testimony:

That the aforesaid Agnes, their mother, held, believed, taught, and defended, that the sacrament of the altar was but bread, and not the very body of Christ's flesh and blood: that baptism was no better in the font, than out of the font: that confirmation was of no effect: that the solemnization of matrimony was not a sacrament: that confession to God alone was sufficient: also that going on pilgrimage and worshipping of saints and images was of none effect...²

She was put to death after incriminating herself by the exclamation "that she repented the time that ever she bare those children of her body."

Since Frith was born in Westerham, Kent, in

1. Williams, Religion and the English Vernacular, pp. 32-34.

2. Foxe, op. cit., V, 650.

1503 and spent his childhood in Sevenoakes, a few miles up the stream from Westerham, the question arises whether Frith came out of the "known men" or whether he was influenced by them in any way. It is not altogether impossible that Frith's father could have been a "known man" since he was an innkeeper and of the social class which was attracted by them. That the "known men" were active in Frith's area is known from the case of Richard Favell of Westerham who recanted in Bromley Church in 1507 for maintaining that the curse of the Church was not to be feared, and that the use of holy water and of offering days was needless.¹ The likelihood is, however, that neither Richard Frith nor his son John were connected in any way with the "known men"; at least there are no facts to support a connection. But these investigations of 1511 may well have left an impression on the eight year old boy, for in his treatise on purgatory there is a peculiar reference to one such investigation.

I have heard tell /Frith writes/ of a boy, which was present at his father's burning for his belief, and as soon as the officers had espied the boy, they said each to other, /sic/ 'Let us take him and examine him also, peradventure we shall find him as great an heretic as his father.' When the boy saw that his father was dead, and that the catchpoles began to snatch at him, he was sore dismayed, and thought that he should die too; and when one of them apposed him, asking him how he believed, he answered, 'Master, I believe even as it pleaseth you.'²

These three centers, Amersham, London and Kent,

1. Simkins, A History of the County of Kent, V.C.H. II, 63.

2. Frith, Works, p. 198.

were not isolated, but they were in constant communication with each other by means of teachers who traveled from one group to another. For instance it was alleged that Thomas Man had traveled between Amersham, London, Billericay, Chelmsford, Stratford, and the Forest of Windsor and that he and his wife had converted six or seven hundred people into the opinions of the "known men".¹ Others migrated to new localities and brought with them news from their "Conventicles". One such case was that of Henry Miller who in 1521 was accused of moving from Amersham to Chelmsford. Foxe relates that "...he abjured and did penance in Kent before, and afterwards coming to Amersham, taught them (as he said) many heresies."² Contact between the main centers of the "known men" was maintained in one way or another.

In the examinations contained in the episcopal registers, abjurations meet the eye on every page. In fact, abjuration was so common in 1506 that for many years - at least until 1521 - it was known as the "Great Abjuration". Subterfuge and secrecy bred abjuration rather than martyrdom. Although there doubtless was a hard core to the movement, yet on the whole the "known men" had grown soft. It is conceivable that new converts would easily give way to the adroit cross-examination of the bishops and indict their brothers; but what is difficult

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 213-214.

2. Ibid., IV, 228.

to understand is the way in which some of the leaders such as "Old Father Hacker" and John Pykas betrayed many "known men", some of whom were their own converts.¹

The "known men" derived much of their strength from the strong families of the neighbourhood who had been Lollards for some time. Some of these families were the Hardkings, Durdants, Colins and the Bartletts. Often this reacted adversely, for the angry son-in-law would betray his mother-in-law in a reckless thirst for vengeance, and end up by indicting the whole family. Besides, since the second and third generations often find very little in the religious experience of their fathers, it would be the natural step to abjure when pressure is applied.

Perhaps another explanation of the great number of abjurations lies in the realm of theology. Aside from a few theologically shallow treatises such as Wycliffe's Wicket and The Examination of William Thorpe, the "known men" possessed little theology. And what they did manage to feed upon was mostly of a negative nature. In fact, they were not really interested in theology, but as "cottage" Bible study groups, they were more interested in the plain text of the Scriptures. The theological arguments of the more subtle bishops must have convinced many that Scripture may after all be subject to varying interpretations.

1. Strype, Memorials, I, 116-117; 128-132.

Foxe says that in "four principal points they stood against the Church of Rome: (1) in pilgrimage, (2) in adoration of the saints, (3) in reading Scripture-books in English, and (4) in the carnal presence of Christ's body in the sacrament."¹ The latest source of information on the "known men" before they were influenced by the Continental Reformation, is found in the Lincoln episcopal register of 1521.

With regard to pilgrimages, the Lincoln register contains the record of Thomas Geffrey, a tailor, first of Uxbridge, then of Ipswich. He was indicted before the Bishop of Lincoln for saying that "...true pilgrimage was, barefoot to go and visit the poor, weak, and sick; for they are the true images of God."²

The main insistence of the "known men" was their demand for the Scriptures and other religious books in the vernacular. From Wycliffe to the Reformation this was the distinguishing characteristic which set them off from all other groups. Foxe tells us that "...some gave five marks" (about £80) for English books, others "...gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. James or of St. Paul in English."³ That some of the "known men" had large libraries of vernacular works may be implied in the notice of Roger Parker. He was arrested because he had

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 218.

2. Ibid., IV, 229.

3. Ibid., IV, 218.

said to John Phip, a physician, that "...he was foul to blame....," for burning his books valued at about one hundred marks (about £1200 today), to which Phip retorted that "...he had rather burn his books, than that his books should burn him."¹

So much were the Scriptures in demand that they were willing to listen to Scripture readings during the night:

Also we object to you, that divers times, and especially upon a certain night, about the space of three years last past, in Robert Durdant's house of Ivercourt near unto Staines, you erroneously and damnably read in a great book of heresy of the said Robert Durdant's, all that same night, certain chapters of the evangelists in English, containing in them divers erroneous and damnable opinions and conclusions of heresy, in the presence of the said Robert Durdant, John Butler, Robert Carder, Jenkin Butler, William King, and divers other suspected persons of heresy, then being present.²

7 Whole New Testaments were not available in large numbers and when they were few people could afford them. Therefore, many of the "known men" were forced to memorize whole books of the New Testament if they were to get "God's law". John Barret, goldsmith of London, "...was heard in his own house, before his wife and maid there present, to recite the epistle of St. James, which epistle, with many other things, he had perfectly without book."³ Agnes Wellis was arrested "...for learning the epistle of St. James in English of Thurston Littlepage."⁴

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 237.

2. Ibid., IV, 178.

3. Ibid., IV, 228.

4. Ibid., IV, 222.

Evidently she could not read, and so she memorized the epistle of St. James to have it with her when Littlepage was absent.

In connection with the vernacular Scriptures, it is noteworthy that the Epistle of James, the Gospels (especially the Beatitudes), and the Apocalypse are most frequently mentioned. Religion for the "known men" was nine-tenths conduct and so the emphasis was on the practical portions of Scripture. The copious mention of the Apocalypse may have been due to the desire to produce Biblical support against images as well as to replenish hope in days of persecution. The epistle ^{to the} of Romans was less frequently mentioned and consequently there was no doctrine of "justification by faith" as it later became known after the influence of Luther.

The worst heresy of these "known men", according to the traditionalists, was their view of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Typical was the statement of Thomas Man who said "...that Christ was not substantially in the sacrament."¹ Most of them would state categorically that the bread and wine were merely figurative of the body and blood of Christ. But there were some who were not satisfied with either extreme and who seemed to feel toward a mediating position. This perhaps was the case of Elizabeth Stamford who in 1506 taught these words to Thomas Beele:

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 226.

Christ feedeth, and fast nourisheth his church with his own precious body, that is, the bread of life coming down from heaven: this is the worthy Word that is worthily received and joined unto man, to be in one body with him. Sooth it is, that they be both one, they may not be parted: this is the wisely deeming of the Holy Sacrament, Christ's own body: this is not received by chewing of teeth, but by hearing with ears, and understanding with your soul, and wisely working thereafter. Therefore, saith St. Paul, I fear me amongst us, brethren, that many of us be feeble and sick; therefore I counsel us, brethren, to rise and watch, that the great day of doom come not suddenly upon us, as the thief doth upon the merchant.¹

This, however, must have been the exception, for most of the entries in the registers merely speak of the Sacramental elements as bare signs in the Lord's Supper. But on the other hand this quotation militates against the view that the Reformers were obstructed by the "known men" in their efforts for reformation. There must have been many who dovetailed into the Reformation, for not all were English Anabaptists.

In spite of their criticisms of the Church the "known men" seem to have remained in its fellowship. It is true that many would refuse to go to Mass and when they did go they would not look at the Host as it was raised by the Priest. Nevertheless, there is no indication that they refused baptism and Christian burial.² What they were interested in was a more vital personal religion derived mainly from the reading of the New Testament. For instance, one unusual custom was the reading of Scripture

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 205.

2. Rupp, The English Protestant Tradition, p. 4.

at weddings. "At the marriage of Durdant's daughter they assembled together in a barn, and heard a certain epistle of St. Paul read."¹ The most common example of supplementing the existing Church life is exemplified in the testimony of Roger Bennet, who betrayed several of the "known men", "...for that upon the holidays, when they go and come from the Church, they use to resort unto one J. Collingworth's house, and there to keep their conventicle."²

After the death of the Amersham martyrs in 1521 the religious life of the "known men" underwent considerable change under the influence of foreign reformatory movements. Some of them were attracted by the more orthodox Reformers of the Continent, while others found the radical Anabaptists more to their way of thinking. In fact, English Anabaptism, as Rupp cautions, is not to be explained wholly in terms of Dutch influence.³ The truth is that as the tenets of Anabaptism reached England there were many "known men" who found their beliefs almost identical, especially on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Union with the Anabaptists, therefore, was no problem for the more theologically radical "known men" and in 1536 deputies from England were present at a meeting of Anabaptist leaders in Westphalia.⁴

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 228.

2. Ibid., p. 224.

3. Rupp, op. cit., p. 1.

4. Summers, The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills, p. 161

The main influence of the 1520's, however, came from the more orthodox Reformers, especially those in Germany. Luther's books began infiltrating into England shortly before 1521. Polydore Vergil in the same year first mentions the presence of such books.¹ Our knowledge of the manner in which the "known men" passed into the Reformation is derived from Foxe who records the register of Bishop Fitzjames of London. This register contains information on John Higges, "alias Noke, alias Johnson" who was brought before Fitzjames in 1523 because among other heresies,

...he had in his custody a book of the four evangelists in English, and did often read therein; and that he favoured the doctrines and opinions of Martin Luther, openly pronouncing that Luther had more learning in his little finger, than all the doctors in England in their whole bodies.²

As the Reformation gained momentum on the Continent, and as Englishmen went to Germany to learn the new doctrines, the "known men" were eagerly waiting for news from the Reformers. One such interested group was assembled at Hichenden, Buckinghamshire in 1530 in the house of John Taylor. There they heard Nicholas Field of London read "...a parcel of Scripture in English unto them, [and] who there expounded to them many things..., for he was beyond the sea in Almany..."³ Nicholas Field no doubt had much to tell his brothers at what might have been one of

1. Denys Hay (Ed.) The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil A.D. 1485-1537, p. 277.

2. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 172.

3. Ibid., IV, 584.

their all-night meetings.

THE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN

The literature of the Reformation contains many references to a group who called themselves the Christian Brethren or the Brethren in Christ. Who were the members of this group and were they merely an organization formed for the distribution of books as J.A. Froude, J.R. Green and others imagined? The most important source of information is found in a "Communication of Sebastian Newdigate to Mr. Denny of a Society of Christian Brethren, formed for the Distribution of Lutheran Books", from which the following is taken.

Md yt Sebastian Newdygate hathe receyued of certayn persones dyuerse bookes of the whiche: twoo be against the sacrament of the Awter. Item yt one Thomas Keyle Mercer of London shewid me yt there was made for the Augmentacion of Christen brethren of his sorte: Auditors and Clerks wt in this Citie. And yt every Christen brother of their sorte shulde pay a certayn sum of money to the afore-said Clerks which shulde goo into all the quarters of this Reame, and at certayn tymes the Auditors to take Accompte of them.

.....

And then I asked hym how he and his other Fellowes wolde do seyng the Kyngs grace and these greate lordes of the Realme were agaynst them: the whiche said yt they had all redy twoo thowsande bookes out agaynst the blessid Sacrament in the Commens handes with bookes concernyng dyuerse other matters, affirmyng yt if it were ones in the Commens heds thei wolde haue no farther care.¹

From this it is apparent that the society was a well organized group of different types of men, who were interested in the dissemination of their doctrines and books throughout the realm.

1. Foxe, op. cit., (Pratt's edition) V, Appendix XIII.

Their activity, however, was not limited to book dealing. They were enterprising enough to see the possibilities of expanding their trade by subsidizing men like Frith and Tyndale, who were forced to carry on their writing overseas. Sir Thomas More was mostly in the dark with respect to their activities, but he discovered who supported the English heretics abroad.

These fellowes that naughte had^{de} here, and therefore naughte caried hence, nor nothyng fyndinge there to lyue upon, bee yet sustained and maintained with moneye sente them by some evil dysposed persones oute of this realme thether, and that for none other entent, but to make them sytte and seeke oute heresydes, and spedelye sende them hether. Whiche bookes, albeit that they neither can bee there prynded withoute greate cost, nor here solde without great adventure and perill, yet cease they not with money sent from hence, to print them there and sende them hether by the hole fattes full at once, and in some places lookyng for no lucre, cast them abrode by night,...¹

So effective were the efforts of the Christian Brethren that More complained:

Our Lorde sende us now some yeres as plentuous of good corne, as we haue had some yeres of late, plentuous of euill bookes. For they haue growen so fast, and sprongen up so thycke, full of pestilent errours and pernicious heresies, that they haue infected and kylled, I feare me, moe selye symple soules, then the famine of the deare yeares haue destroyed bodyes. And sureli no litle cause ther is to drede that the great haboundance and plentie of the ~~X~~one, is no litle cause and occasion of the greate dearthe and scarcitie of the tother.²

According to More the number of imported books was so great that their bare titles alone would comprise a book.³

1. More, Works, p. 344.

2. Ibid., p. 339.

3. Ibid., p. 341.

The purpose of the Society of Christian Brethren was also for the "Augmentacion of Christian Brethren". Recruits were constantly needed to subsidize the ever widening venture of book making and distribution. Their efforts were crowned with success, as can be seen from Sir Thomas More's complaint.

And thus of suche bookes, as sore as they bee forbidden: yet are there manye boughte. For the peryll refrayneth not muche people from the bying, syth ther is none house lyghtly that hath so lyttle rounge, that lacketh the rounge to hyde a booke therein. But when thei had the bookes, if men would abhorre theyr talking: gone wer all the pleasure that they take therein. But now whyle men controle them not but laugh and let them bable: pryde maketh them procede, and they procure mo and spred the bookes more abroade, and draw moe brethren to them.¹

Who were some of the agents for the Christian Brethren? We know from extant records that Barnes, Bayfield, Hytton, Constantine and Frith were agents who secretly brought books whenever they returned from the Continent. Of these agents Thomas Hytton may be taken as an example. After adopting Lutheran views he left the priesthood and joined the Christian Brethren. Regarding his activities Sir Thomas More remarks:

[He was] sent to and fro, betwene our englishe heretikes beyond the sea, and such as wer here at home. Nowe happed it so that after he had visited here his holy congregacions, in diuers corners and lusked lanes, and comforted them in the Lorde to stande stiffe with the deuill in their errours and heresies, as he was going backe agayn at graues end, [He was arrested].²

1. More, op. cit., p. 1036.

2. Ibid., p. 344.

The authorities searched him and found letters "written from evangelicall bretheren here, unto the evangelicall heretikes beyonde the sea."¹ This was sufficient evidence to bring on his martyrdom at Maidstone, Kent in 1530,² a fate meted out to more than one of the Christian Brethren.

It has been suggested that the Christian Brethren were none other than the "known men".³ This conclusion has arisen from the fact that a few names of the Christian Brethren are identical with those of the "known men" found in the episcopal register. One of the most important links is Thomas Philip. In 1530 he was arrested on a charge of heresy and conveyed to the London Tower. On the way to the Tower, he received a letter from the Brethren which indicates that he was a Christian Brother. Now Philip was betrayed prior to this occasion by Stacy who was a "known man" of the London group.⁴ Richard Bayfield who was an agent of the Christian Brethren, was connected with Stacy and others of the "known men".

This Richard Bayfield, sometime a monk of Bury, was converted by Dr. Barnes, and two godly men of London, brickmakers, Master Maxwell and Master Stacy, wardens of their company, who were grafted in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and through their godly conversation of life converted many men and women, both in London and in the country, and once a year, of their own cost, went about to visit the brethren and sisters scattered abroad.⁵

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1. More, op. cit., p. 345.
 2. Simkins, op. cit., V.C.H. II, 67.
 3. Chaplin, Church Quarterly Review, 1939.
 4. Foxe, op. cit., V, 29.
 5. Ibid., IV, 681.

That Philip and Stacy were "known men" is attested by Bishop Longland's register of 1521 where both names appear among the "known men".¹

Furthermore in support of this identification ^{the} it is pointed out that terms "known man" and "brother" (a shortened form of Christian Brother) are used interchangeably in the episcopal registers. For example, John Pylas of Colchester on April 16th 1528 said that "Gyrlyng has been reputed a 'known man' and a 'brother in Christ' for three years" and "Thomas Mathew's wife has been a 'known woman' and of the 'brother-hood' for twelve years."² It should be noted, however, that the interchange of names is only present with the "known men" of Essex and Suffolk, areas in which the Christian Brethren were particularly interested for the purpose of smuggling their books from the Continent in connection with the cloth and wool trade.³

The term "brethren" ought not to be confined to a certain group such as the "known men". For at this time converts were made in all parts of the realm through the reading of these newly imported books and they, too, were called "brethren". This accounts for the references found in the writings of Sir Thomas More who referred to them as the "new-named brethren" and "this new broached

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 236.

2. Strype, op. cit., pp. 129-131.

3. Rupp, op. cit., p. 8.

brotherhood", alluding to their recent origin.

The Christian Brethren included others who were not "known men". Wealthy merchants such as Humphrey Monmouth, Richard Hilles, and William Petit were attracted to the new organization as well as scholars of the Universities and religious houses like those of Reading and Bury St. Edmunds. The latter group were more interested in the Latin volumes of the Continental Reformers than in the current vernacular literature.¹

The "known men" and the "Christian Brethren" were not identical terms for the same people. It is true that once the books of the Christian Brethren were landed in England, the "known men" formed the largest market. Beyond this connection one may only conjecture a closer tie.

If the "known men" and the "Christian Brethren" are not synonymous terms, how can there be a link between the Reformers and the "known men" as has been alleged? Chaplin suggests that the early Reformers such as Tyndale, Frith, Barnes and Bilney were "known men" and to them we owe the printed New Testament.² The link between the two groups was thought to be Frith. In support of this the following quotation from Frith's treatise on the Lord's Supper was advanced.

I chanced, being in these parts, to be in company with a Christian brother, which for his commendable conversation, and sober behaviour, might better be a bishop than many that wear mitres, if the rule of St. Paul were regarded in their election. This brother, after

1. Rupp, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

2. Chaplin, op. cit., p. 22.

much communication, desired to know my mind, as touching the sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ. Which thing I opened unto him, according to the gift that God had given me.¹

This quotation, however, does not support the theory that Frith was a "Christian Brother" or a "known man". Frith's connection with the Christian Brother was merely casual, and proves, if anything, that until this time, he was unacquainted with them. The fact that his treatise on the Lord's Supper circulated among them does not mean that he had any earlier connections with the Christian Brethren or the "known men". Nor does his letter prove any connection beyond the relationship which existed at that time. We may conclude, therefore, that neither John Frith nor the early English Reformers sprang from the "known men". "The probability is that two originally separate strands were drawn together by common need and common persecution."²

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 321.

2. Rupp, op. cit., p. 11.

CHAPTER II

SCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES

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The contemporaries of Frith, both friend and foe with one voice, attest his great learning. Germain Gardiner, Stephen Gardiner's relative and a jealous partisan of the traditionalists, wrote, "His learning, to say the truth, for his age was to be praised,...I mean his learning in the tongues and other humanity..."¹, a magnanimous assertion by an opponent but not without the usual depreciation of his theological knowledge. Foxe, on the other hand, not unexpectedly embellishes his description, but he does so in keeping with the general impression gained from a study of Frith's writings and other surviving biographical details. With reference to Frith, Foxe remarks:

...in whom nature had planted, being but a child, marvellous instincts and love unto learning, whereunto he was addicted. He had also a wonderful promptness of wit, and a ready capacity to receive and understand any thing, but also born for the same purpose. Neither was there any diligence wanting in him, equal unto that towardness, or worthy of his disposition; whereby it came to pass, that he was not only a lover of learning, but also became an exquisite learned man; in which exercise when he had diligently laboured certain years, not without great profit both of Latin and Greek, at last he fell into knowledge and acquaintance with William Tyndale...²

The years spent at Eton and Cambridge as a scholar, and at Oxford as a fellow or canon, were mainly instrumental in making Frith a distinguished linguist and theologian. It is, however, disappointing that only the barest of

1. Gardiner, "A letter of a yonge gentylman named mayster Germen Gardynare..." p. 7.

2. Foxe, op. cit., V, 4.

facts remain to reconstruct his scholastic life.

ETON

Eton was in existence for nearly seventy-five years when Frith began his studies there. Henry VI founded the school in 1440 on somewhat the same lines as the school at Winchester. Special emphasis was laid on the ecclesiastical aspect, and provision was made by the King for prayers to be said by the members of the college for himself, his ancestors, his successors and all Christian souls. Although a majority of the scholars went to Cambridge, and took clerical orders, there were some who studied the liberal arts, sciences, and faculties. Eton, therefore, was more than a seminary or a college of destined clerics and theologians.¹

Four illustrious Protestant martyrs are claimed by this renowned college. John Hullier, Robert Glover, and Laurence Saunders gave their lives heroically during the Marian purge. But none of these men surpasses John Frith who has the distinction of being Eton's first martyr for the Protestant faith.²

The dates of Frith's residence at Eton are unknown. Sir Wasey Sterry believes the approximate dates are between 1520 and 1522.³ However, since he graduated B.A. from Kings in 1525, he must have begun his univer-

1. Sterry, The Eton College Register 1441-1698, p. XIII.

2. Ibid., p. XXV.

3. Ibid., p. 131.

sity career about 1518 or 1519. How long he was at Eton is not known, but judging from his ability and the express statute that boys who are foremost in grammar are the first to proceed to Kings, Frith may not have been there for more than a few years.¹

There were two types of students at Eton during Frith's time, the regular scholars and the commensals who were trained gratis. Frith, no doubt, entered as a commensal since his father was an innkeeper. From the foundation of the school there was provision for such scholars who were to be "boys of good character and decent life, poor and needy..."² Entrance competition evidently was not keen for there is reason to believe that the college was not filled to capacity during the first twenty or thirty years of the 16th century.³

Judging by modern standards, life at Eton during the 16th century was hard for the school boy. From two surviving accounts, that of Richard Cox in 1528 and that of William Malim in 1561, one is able to reconstruct Eton life as it was during Frith's time with a good deal of accuracy. The day began with the shouting of "Surgite" by a prefect at 5:00 a.m. While dressing, the boys chanted their prayers and, after making their beds and sweeping up the dust, they went down to the pump two by two

1. Lyte, History of Eton College, p. 494.

2. Ibid., p. 495.

3. Sterry, op. cit., P. XXIV.

to perform their ablutions - rather a cold experience on a dark wintry morning. Cleanliness, however, was insisted upon for there was a special prefect who examined the boys for "ill kept hedys, unwashed facys, fowle clothes and sich other."¹ From six to nine the boys studied; at nine breakfast was served, after which prayers commenced at ten. Lunch was at eleven in the Hall to which the students marched in pairs. Class work commenced at noon and lasted until three when the boys were allowed to go out into the Playing Fields. From four to five further lessons were given, followed by an interval for supper. The prefects then supervised the boys in studies from six to eight when the normal daily routine ended by the chanting of prayers while the boys were getting ready for bed at eight. After nine hours of school work and one hour of play, the normal school day ended.

Judging from the routine of the school day it is not without reason that Eton's reputation for flogging was so well known. Nicholas Udall, Master of Eton from 1534-1543, has been described as the "best schoolmaster and the greatest beater of our time". Tusser confirms the flogging aspect in the following lines penned in 1543:

From Paul's I went, to Eton sent,
To learn straitways the Latin phrase:
Where stripes fifty-three, all given to me,
At once I had:
For faults but small, or none at all...²

Malim gave an account of the school work which

1. Hill, A History of Eton College, p. 19.

2. Ackerman, Eton, p. 59.

was limited almost exclusively to the study of Latin. The boys in the lower forms had to decline and conjugate words, and their seniors had to repeat rules of grammar. The latter used a textbook entitled Vulgaria which consisted of a number of Latin sentences with their English equivalents. Each day the Eton scholar had to produce some type of Latin composition, whether a translation of an English sentence into Latin as in the lower forms, or a theme in the fifth form, while the boys in the sixth and seventh forms wrote verses.¹

Latin was not all that was taught at Eton. There is reason to believe that from about 1509 Greek was taught. Robert Aldrich, a friend and admirer of Erasmus, taught Latin and most likely introduced Greek. From an early time in Frith's career, he had the opportunity to become proficient in both Latin and Greek.

The intention of Henry VI to send the best students to King's College, Cambridge was ceremoniously carried out once a year. Near the end of July the elections to Kings were conducted by the Provost, two Fellows of Kings, who were to come with no more than ten horses, the Vice-Provost and the Head-Master of Eton. The elections were to be strictly impartial, disregarding "prayers or requests of kings or queens, princes or prelates, nobles or gentlemen, and looking rather to the proficiency of the boys in grammar and to their moral character."²

1. Lyte, op. cit., p. 146.

2. Ibid., p. 494

Whether Frith qualified on this basis is unknown for the next notice of him mentions that he was a student at Queen's College. It would seem that he left Eton for Queen's before qualifying as a King's scholar.

CAMBRIDGE

Of the English centers of learning in the 16th century, Cambridge was perhaps the foremost. John Fisher, Chancellor from 1504 to 1534, favored the Humanist approach and invited Erasmus in 1511 to teach Greek at Cambridge. Erasmus, who had previously visited Colet at Oxford, had become unhappy and left for Paris in 1500. His unhappiness in a large measure was due to the mounting tension caused by the Humanists' introduction of Greek learning. Feelings were running so high that from the pulpit of St. Mary's in Oxford a friar once inveighed against the Grecians, the name given to the protagonists of the "New Learning", while his hearers, who called themselves the Trojans, were preparing to pour out of the church to battle.¹ Tyndale tells us of another occasion which probably took place in Oxford while he was a student there. Writing to Sir Thomas More, Tyndale continues:

Remember ye not how within this thirty years and far less, and yet dureth unto this day, the old barking curs, Duns' disciples and like draff, called Scotists, the children of darkness, raged in every pulpit against Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and what sorrow the schoolmasters, that taught the true Latin tongue, had with them, some beating the pulpit with their fists for madness, and roaring out with open and foaming mouth, that if there were but one Terence or Virgil

1. Maynard-Smith, Henry VIII and the Reformation, p. 240.

in the world, and that same in their sleeves, and a fire before them, they would burn them therein, though it should cost them their lives; affirming that all good learning decayed and was utterly lost, since men gave them unto the Latin tongue.¹

Oxford during the last decade of the 15th century was blessed with staunch humanist supporters such as Colet, More and Erasmus, but soon the University declined in the "New Learning" as a result of the humanist's departure and strife between the adherents of the old and the new schools. With the calling of Erasmus to Cambridge, a new era began. What took place is best described by Erasmus in a letter to Bullock, his Cambridge friend and fellow of Queens, shortly after his New Testament appeared in 1516.

It is scarcely thirty years ago, when all that was taught in the university of Cambridge, was Alexander, the Little Logicals (as they call them), and those old exercises out of Aristotle, and quaestiones taken from Duns Scotus. As times went on, polite learning was introduced; to this was added a knowledge of mathematics, a new, or at least a regenerated, Aristotle sprang up; then came an acquaintance with Greek, and with a host of new authors whose very names had before been unknown, even to their profoundest doctors. And how, I would ask, has this affected your university? Why, it has flourished to such a degree that it can now compete with the chief universities of the age, and can boast of men in comparison with whom theologians of the old school seem only the ghosts of theologians.²

The educational setting could not have been finer during the second decade of the 16th century for a keen student as Frith. Erasmus had left Cambridge in 1514, but his influence remained. There is no doubt that it

1. Tyndale, Answer to More, Works, P.S. III, 75.

2. Mullinger, The University of Cambridge, I, 516.

was Erasmus' writings which first opened a new area of learning to the young inquisitive mind of Frith. He, no doubt, read the Enconomium Morie with amused delight. The Enchiridion, which Tyndale translated about 1522, was more seriously read and may have moved Frith with its devotional warmth and its emphasis on the authority of the New Testament.

But of all the writings which Erasmus produced, the Novum Testamentum was his greatest and most influential. For the first time a translator was bold enough to analyse critically the Latin Vulgate version with the aid of the newly found manuscripts with a view to securing a purer text. Erasmus thought that if the Vulgate were corrected, much of the old theology and accretions of the Middle Ages would be banished. This work, largely the result of his stay at Cambridge between 1511 and 1514, did not appear until 1516 from a press in Basle. It was received with mixed feelings at Cambridge. Some denounced it because it differed from the Vulgate in some instances; others criticised it because of the side comments which were directed against the ecclesiastical body.¹ But still another group welcomed it and read it diligently. Of these, Bilney's testimony to Erasmus' work is worth quoting. In a letter to Tunstal he wrote:

I hearde speake of Jesus, even then when the New Testament was first set forth by Erasmus. Which when I understood to be eloquently done by him, being allured rather for the Latin than for the word of God (for at that time I knew not what it meant), I bought it, even by the providence of God, as I do

1. Mullinger, op. cit., I, 512-513.

now well understand and perceive. And at the first reading (as I well remember) I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul (O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul:) in I Tim. 1. "It is a true saying and worthy of all men to be embraced that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief and principal." This one sentence, through God's instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sin, and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness in so much that my bruised bones leaped for joy.¹

Besides the Novum Testamentum, Erasmus' Paraclesis - an exhortation to the reading of the Holy Scripture, printed as a Prologue to the New Testament - may have influenced Frith even before he met Tyndale. Both men were tremendously influenced by it. Erasmus wrote:

I would desire that all women should read the gospel and Paul's epistles, and I would to God they were translated into the tongues of all men, so that they might not only be known of the Scots and Irishmen, but also of the Turks and Saracens.... I would to God that the ploughman would sing a text of the scripture at his plough-beam; and that the weaver at his loom with this would drive away the tediousness of time. I would the wayfaring man with this pastime would expel the weariness of his journey. And, to be short, I would that all the communication of the Christian should be of the scripture; for in a manner, such are we ourselves, as our daily tales are.... We cannot call any man a Platonist, unless he have read the works of Plato, yet call we them Christian, yea and divines, which never have read the scriptures of Christ.... If we covet to withdraw our minds from the tedious cares of this life; why had we liefer [sic] learn the wisdom of Christ's doctrine out of men's books, than of Christ Himself, which in this scripture doth chiefly perform that thing which He promised unto us, when He said that He would continue with us unto the end of the world? For in this Testament He speaketh, breatheth and liveth among us in a manner more effectually than when His body was presently conversant in this world.²

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 635.

2. Deansly, op. cit., p. 386.

Perhaps it was Frith who translated this into English in 1529, for both Foxe and Bale, contemporaries of Frith, credit him with translating other works out of the Latin and Dutch. William Roy has been thought by some to have translated it, but there is no proof of this. Since it was translated in 1529 and bears the Hans Luft colophon, it was published by one closely connected with Tyndale. Tyndale had already translated Erasmus' Enchiridion, and he may have suggested the Paraclesis to Frith. That Frith was engaged in translating is known from the fact that in 1529 he translated Luther's Revelation of Anti-christ.

The paraphrases on the Scriptures and the editions of the Fathers would equally appeal to the young scholar. The latter perhaps furnished Patristic authority for Frith's doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

With Frith there was no dramatic effect attending the reading of Erasmus' New Testament such as Bilney felt, yet he was thoroughly saturated with Erasmus' edition of the Greek Testament and constantly referred to it in his writings. In fact he used it to good advantage by showing where Sir Thomas More, the intimate friend of Erasmus, failed to follow the Dutchman in translating a verse after the Greek original.

Frith also felt the influence of Erasmus through his friend Richard Croke. After graduating B.A. from King's in 1509-10, Croke went to Oxford to study Greek

under Grocyn. It seems that he met Erasmus before he left Cambridge, for Erasmus was interested in him and even sought to secure financial aid for him from Colet.¹ From Oxford Croke went to Paris where he acquired a considerable reputation. He then taught in Germany for some years but in 1517 he returned to Cambridge and graduated M.A. In 1518 he commenced a series of lectures on Greek and in 1519 he was formally appointed reader in Greek to the University.

One wonders whether Frith was present at Croke's inaugural oration in which he called to the student's attention the merits of studying Greek. Croke pointed to the antiquity of the Greek language and showed how even the traditional trivium and quadrivium could be enriched by the study of Greek. When he came to theology, he disarmed his hearers by his favorable references to Aquinas and Duns Scotus. But he pleaded for a supplementation of the Schoolmen's works by the Greek Scriptures, in order that the student would not waste his powers on the minute distinctions of the subtle Scholastics. It may have been due to the enlightened lectures of Croke that Frith was led to denounce the old thinkers as "Dominic, Scotus, Occam and such dross", a characteristic criticism aired by many young Cambridge Humanists.

It is significant that during Frith's stay at Cambridge, interest in the reforming tendencies of the time was in evidence. The negative attacks on the Church

1. Mullinger, op. cit., I, 527.

by Erasmus were merely the prelude to the positive theology of Luther; and it was inevitable that once the students accepted the ideas of the former, they would look with an inviting eye to the doctrines from beyond the sea. Perhaps it was in the year 1517 when Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the doors of the Wittenberg Church, that Peter de Valence defied the authorities by writing over the face of the newly posted indulgences of Pope Leo X the following words: "Blessed is the Man whose hope is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not respected those Vanities, and lying madnesses." Chancellor Fisher threatened to excommunicate the offender who was supposed to appear before a given deadline. The culprit did not appear and Fisher pronounced him excommunicated. Nothing more is known of Peter de Valence, but his act was indicative of turbulent times ahead.

Of more importance to the Reformation at Cambridge and later throughout England was the gathering of a small group of students and teachers at the White Horse Inn.¹ Smith suggests that the gathering may have originated in 1518² while Rupp speaks of the "twenties".³ It is not impossible that Bilney with a few friends gathered at the White Horse as early as 1518 to discuss Erasmus' edition of the New Testament. But the small group could not have become so conspicuous as to be called "Germans" until

1. For the site of the White Horse Inn see Batley, On a Reformer's Latin Bible.

2. Smith, op. cit., p. 253. 3. Rupp, op. cit., p. 18

after Luther's three treatises, Reformation of the Church, Christian Liberty and Babylonian Captivity, appeared in 1520. Therefore the most active years of the White Horse group were between 1520 and 1525, when Frith was a Cambridge student.

It is not quite clear how we are to look at these meetings. Protestants have imagined secret sessions where brethren met to discuss methods of making new converts while Catholics were certain that the ruin of the Church was being planned in dark back rooms. Neither is entirely correct. It was more of an open theological society where members of the University could air their views without being reported to the University authorities. The company included Bilney, the young evangelist and his converts, Barnes, Arthur, John Lambert, and later in 1524 the once stalwart foe of the Reformation ideas, Hugh Latimer. Barnes, no doubt, was the nominal leader but it was Bilney who was the real leading spirit. Other important participators were George Stafford, Reader in Divinity; John Thixtill of Pembroke College; William Paget and Richard Smith of Trinity Hall; Shaxton, Fellow of Gonville Hall; Crome of the same college; John Rogers of Pembroke College; Matthew Parker, future Primate, of Corpus Christi; George Joye, of Peterhouse; and John Frith of Queen's and later King's College. There were also prominent members of the University who frequently went to the meetings, such as Dr. Warner, Fellow of Corpus Christi

College, and Dr. Forman, president of Queen's. Even Gardiner and Fox, staunch traditionalists, frequented the meetings.

It is not known what part Frith had in these meetings. Since he was second youngest of the members (Travener being two years younger), his part was more of absorption than contribution. If the meetings began in 1518 he was only 15 years old, hardly a match for the older members such as Coverdale, aged 30, or Forman and Dr. Warner, both middle-aged men. Even by 1525 when Bilney and Barnes were drawing the attention of the authorities by their open advocacy of reform, we hear nothing of Frith.

The members of the White Horse Society engaged in other activities than theological discussions. Bilney, who previously set out to confess his sins to Father Latimer and wound up the confessional session by converting Latimer, was seen many times with Latimer walking around Castle Hill (afterwards named "Heretic's Hill") discussing the current topics of religion. Their activity was extended to cover visitation of the sick; and they even went to the local prison to console and convert the inmates.¹ There was another person of the Society who combined the theoretical with the practical religious elements. George Stafford (the first to lecture from the Scriptures in place of the Sentences at Cambridge) ended his career by one last charitable deed. He took upon

1. Batley, On a Reformer's Latin Bible, p. 8.

himself the risky task of visiting a priest who was addicted to the study of necromancy, and who was suffering at that time from the effects of the plague. Before Stafford left, the priest had been converted and the "conjuring books" cast into the flames. But, unfortunately for Stafford, he caught the plague and died a short time later. Such were some of the men who were intimate associates of Frith, men not only of high scholastic attainments, but also high in the cultivation of charity and humility.¹

It was during his Cambridge residence that Frith made the acquaintance of William Tyndale, by whom, according to Foxe, he "first received into his heart the seed of the gospel and sincere godliness."² Tyndale's biographers, however, have not agreed on the time and place of this occurrence. Mozley suggests that Tyndale met Frith at Cambridge, sometime during or before 1522,³ while Demaus argues, on what authority he does not state, that Frith could not have enrolled at Cambridge before 1522, and consequently they met in London in 1524.⁴ But Frith, as will be shown, was at Cambridge about the same time as Tyndale. From the two sources in Foxe it seems that Tyndale first met Frith at Cambridge and later in London where he conferred with him on the necessity of

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 656.

2. Ibid., V, 4.

3. Mozley, op. cit., p. 20..

4. Demaus, William Tyndale, p. 24.

Scripture being "turned into the vulgar speech, that the poor people might also read and see the simple plain word of God."¹ The meeting in London is not altogether impossible. Bale, who was a contemporary of Frith, relates the erroneous information that Frith was born in London.² But if Bale's assertion was an inference from his knowledge that Frith's parents were later living in London,³ it would have been entirely possible for Tyndale to have conferred with Frith while visiting his parents in London on school holidays. Tyndale, it should be remembered, was resident in London from August 1523 to about April 1524.

Not much about Frith's student days is known beside the fact that at one time Stephen Gardiner was his tutor. More, writing in the Apology, says that Frith was "not many yeres ago a yonge boye waytynge uppon hym [Gardiner] and a scoler of hys."⁴ It was customary for the poorer student to live at a master's house where he could earn his living by serving.⁵ Since Edward Fox, fellow at King's, had preceded Frith from Eton a few years before, it may have been he, the great friend of Gardiner, who first introduced them. A problem, however, arises since Gardiner was connected with Trinity Hall and not Queen's

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 118.

2. Bale as quoted by Richmond, A Selection from the Writings of the Reformers, p. 629.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 80. Foxe in his life of Frith, prefixed to the 1578 edition of the works of Tyndale, Frith and Barnes, mentions Frith's parents as living in London at the time of Frith's martyrdom.

4. More, (ed. Taft) Apology (E.E.T.S.), p. 140

5. Rashdall, Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, III, 357.

or King's where Frith attended classes. The solution may lie in the supposition that Frith was an unofficial scholar of Gardiner's, and perhaps only for a short time.

Either during or after his residence at Gardiner's home, Frith was admitted to Queen's College. He was entered in the records as a resident scholar in 1523-4.¹ How many terms he completed at Queen's is unknown, but soon after 1524 he moved to King's College. Here he probably was not a scholar but a pensioner or a sizar. The difference was that a scholar was on the foundation, while the pensioner or sizar paid for his expenses, usually by services rendered to the College.

In the University Grace Book for the year 1524-5 there is reference to Frith as qualifying for his degree. A free translation renders the account as follows:

Again, it is permitted to John Frith that the ten terms (with the term in which he will determine) in which he heard ordinary lectures for the greater part of the whole terms with the required oppositions and responsions should be sufficient for him to "answer the question".²

The "oppositions" and "responsions" referred to usually occurred in December when a preliminary disputation between a senior, in most cases, and the student would determine whether the student was qualified to proceed for his degree in the following spring. Worthy of notice in connection with this quotation is the fact that prior to the school year 1524-5, Frith had spent the minimum of

1. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part I, Vol. II, 181.

2. Searle (ed.), Grace Book, p. 215.

ten terms in residence at Cambridge. Therefore, it is possible that he came earlier, perhaps in 1518 or 1519 as Smith suggests, because it was not uncommon for a boy of 13 or 14 to begin his studies at one of the universities.¹

Another entry in the University Grace Book relating to the year 1525-6 contains information with respect to his B.A.

Again, it is permitted to Master Fryth, candidate in Arts that his admission to the full degree should stand in view of the fact that he cannot attend the next "meeting" owing to his election as fellow of Cardinal College, Oxford, provided he satisfies the officials.²

Since he was incorporated a fellow of Cardinal College, Oxford on December 7, 1525,³ his final examination was waived and he received his B.A. (from King's) in January.

OXFORD

Cardinal Wolsey was zealous in advancing the cause of his beloved University. When he visited Oxford in 1518 he promised to provide for certain daily lectures. He sent the promising young Thomas Lupset, an English student from Paris, to lecture on the classics. Three years later, in 1523, Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish teacher, responded to the call of Wolsey and came to Oxford. With these men Oxford attained a high degree of influence throughout the educational world and became numbered among the leading universities of the day.

1. Neale, The Early Honours Lists (1498-9 to 1746-7) p. 4.

2. Searle, (ed.) Grace Book, p. 221.

3. Boase, Register of the University of Oxford, I, 140.

But Wolsey was not content with this. He planned to found a new college which would far surpass the other colleges in every respect and would eventually rank as the highest in Europe. Similar to other great churchmen who held the highest offices of the State, he desired to erect at Oxford a visible monument to his lavish generosity; an undertaking wholly in accord with what we know of the man.

In order to accomplish this purpose, Wolsey secured from Pope Clement VII in April 1524, a bull authorizing him to suppress the priory of St. Frideswyde, Oxford. Henry VIII assented to the scheme and soon Wolsey took over St. Frideswyde. A few months later he obtained another bull sanctioning him to suppress other smaller monasteries containing fewer than seven professed members. With the Royal favor resting on his plans, Wolsey soon acquired enough money to establish a college at Oxford and obtained a Royal licence to open Cardinal College, which is now known as Christ Church.¹

It was soon apparent that the buildings of Frideswyde's Priory would not be sufficient for the large body of secular students. Additions would not be enough, so Wolsey, with characteristic magnificence, decided to replace them with beautiful collegiate buildings on a site far extended from the original grounds of the convent. The plans called for a cloistered quadrangle, longer and

1. Lyte, History of the University of Oxford, pp. 441-442.

broadier than any in England, with an ornate chapel on its northern side, and chambers on the other three sides. A large tower was to surmount the main gateway in Fish Street. No obstacle was too great to hinder the completion of the work. John Foxe, who entertained biased opinions of the Cardinal, refers to the work in words of commendation:

How large and ample those buildings should have been, what sumptuous cost should have been bestowed upon the same, may easily be perceived by that which is already builded, as the kitchen, the hall, and certain chambers, where there is such curious graving and workmanship of stone-cutters, that all things on every side did glister for the excellency of the workmanship, for the fineness of the matter, with the gilt antics and embossings, insomuch that if all the rest had been finished to that determinate end as it was begun, it might well have excelled not only all colleges of students, but also palaces of princes. This ambitious Cardinal gathered into that College whatsoever excellent thing there was in the whole realm either vestments, vessels, or other ornaments, besides provision of all kind of precious things.¹

Wolsey not only wanted his college to excel all others in buildings but also in its possessions. Accordingly he gathered a great number of vestments for his College from Hampton Court and other places. He also opened negotiations in Italy for the purchase of books at Rome and Venice. Transcriptions of the Greek manuscripts which belonged to Cardinal Bessarion were also sought.²

It was the intention of Wolsey to secure the best scholars from England and abroad to adorn his insti-

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 4.

2. Lyte, History of University of Oxford, p. 450.

tution. Robert Sirton, Master of Pembroke Hall, was selected by Wolsey to choose the best of the promising scholars at Cambridge and invite them to the Cardinal's College. The eight who applied in October 1525 were Henry Sumner, Richard Coxe, William Betts, John Frith, and Winmer Allen, all B.A. from Cambridge and incorporated on December 7, 1525. The other three, John Clerke, John Fryer, and Godfry Harman, all M.A. from Cambridge were incorporated on Nov. 7, 1525. Perhaps it was Edward Fox of King's who had something to do with Frith's acceptance, since Wolsey asked him also to assist in finding the most promising scholars.

Frith and the others were appointed canons in the College with duties similar to the fellows of other colleges. Although there were as many as thirty canons, Frith may have been one of the four styled Private Professors who were to lecture daily soon after six o'clock in the morning, on "sophistry", logic, philosophy, and humanity. It is certain, however, that Frith received commons to the weekly value of 1 shilling and 8 pence, and he received a salary varying in amount from four marks to six pounds according to his academic rank, besides the cloth for his livery. The statutes also specify that canons were to graduate M.A. and that no one without an M.A. was to enter holy orders. This clarifies the problem of Frith's ordination and reveals the fact that he was never ordained since he left the University

before he fulfilled the requirements for the M.A.¹

Not long after Frith's arrival at Oxford the authorities became alarmed over the emergence of Protestant views. The first notice of these views is found in a letter sent to Wolsey by Chancellor Warham.

Please it your good Grace to understand that now I receyvid letters from the Universitie of Oxford, and in thoes same certayne newes whiche I am very sorry to hear. For I am informyd that diverse of that Universitie be infectyd with the heresyeyes of Luther and of others of that sorte, havyng among thym a grete nombre of books of the saide perverse doctrine which wer forboden by your Graces auctorite as Legate de latere of the See apostolique, and also be me as Chauncellor of the saide Universitie, to be hadd, kept, or redd, by any person off the same, except suche as wer licensed to have thayme [sic] to impugne and convince the erroneus opinions conteyned in theym...

For pytie yt wer that through the lewdnes of on or two cankerd members, whiche, as I understand, have enducyd no small nombre of yong and incircumspect foles to geve ere unto thaym, the hole Universitie shuld run in thinfamy of soo haynouse a crime, the heryng wherof shuld be right delectable and plesant to the open Lutheranes beyond the See, and secrete behyther, wherof they wold take harte and confydence that theyr pestilent doctrynes shuld encrese and multiply, seyng bothe the Universities of Inglande enfectid therewith, wherof the on hathe many yeeres been voyd of all heresyeyes, and the other hathe afore nowe take upon hyr the prayse that she was never defyld; and nevertheless nowe she is thought to be the originall occasion and cause of the fall in Oxford.²

Among the Cambridge men who, in the words of Warham, were the "cause of the fall in Oxford" was John Clark. He was the leader of the small group, and attracted many of the younger students by his expositions on Paul's Epistles which were given in his chamber. He was also an

1. Lyte, History of the University of Oxford, p. 451.

2. The precise date of this letter is not known, but it can hardly be earlier than March 8, 1525 or 1526 as Lyte points out. (p. 459) Ellis, Original Letters, 3rd series I, 239-242.

influential preacher and preached the sermons at Poghley in the summer of 1527, when the students temporarily left Oxford because of the plague. Anthony Dalaber, one of the students who was converted by Clark in 1526, tells us how Clark and his associates influenced him, doubtless one of many who were brought to embrace the doctrines of the Reformation. This is found in a vivid document contained in Foxe's works.

When they all were gone, then came unto my remembrance the worthy forewarning and godly declaration of that most constant martyr of God, Master John Clark, my father in Christ, who well nigh two years before that, when I did earnestly desire him to grant me to be his scholar, and that I might go with him continually when and wheresoever he should teach or preach (which he did daily), said unto me much after this sort, 'Dalaber! you desire you wot not what, and that which you are, I fear me, unable to take upon you: for though now my preaching be sweet and pleasant unto you, because there is yet no persecution laid on you for it, yet the time will come, and that peradventure shortly, if ye continue to live godly therein, that God will lay on you the cross of persecution, to try you withal, whether you can, as pure gold, abide the fire, or, as stubble and dross, be consumed therewith. For the Holy Ghost plainly affirmeth by St. Paul, 'Quod omnes qui volunt vivere in Christo Jesu, persecutionem patientur.' Yea, you shall be called and judged a heretic; you shall be abhorred of the world; your own friends and kinsfolk will forsake you, and also hate you; and you shall be cast into prison; and no man shall dare to help or comfort you; and you shall be accused and brought before the bishops, to your reproach and shame, to the great sorrow of all your faithful friends and kinsfolk. Then will ye wish ye had never known this doctrine; then will ye curse Clark, and wish that ye had never known him, because he hath brought you to all these troubles. Therefore, rather than that you should do this, leave off from meddling with this doctrine, and desire not to be, and continue, in my company.'

At which his words I was so grieved, that I fell down on my knees at his feet, and with abundance of tears and sighs, even from the very bottom of my heart I earnestly besought him, that for the tender mercy of God, showed to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, he

would not refuse me, but receive me into his company as I had desired; saying that I trusted verily, that he which had begun this in me, would not forsake me, but give me grace to continue therein unto the end. When he heard me say so, he came to me, took me up in his arms, and kissed me, the tears trickling down from his eyes, and said unto me: "The Lord Almighty grant you so to do, and from henceforth forever take me for your father, and I will take you for my son in Christ." Now were there at that time in Oxford divers graduates and scholars of sundry colleges and halls, whom God had called to the knowledge of his holy word, who all resorted unto Master Clark's disputations and lectures in divinity at all times as they might; and when they might not come conveniently I was, by Master Clark, appointed to resort to every one of them weekly, and to know what doubts they had in any place of the Scripture; that by me, from him, they might have the true understanding of the same; which exercise did me much good and profit, to the understanding of the holy Scriptures, which I most desired.¹

Something of the nature of the White Horse Inn was transferred from Cambridge when Clark, Frith and others came to Oxford. Instead of an Inn, the small group frequented the chamber of a certain Radley, a singing-man, for the purpose of mutual instruction and exhortation. These meetings differed from those held in the White Horse Inn in that the members were well settled in their Lutheran beliefs. If the meetings at the White Horse were open to all, we may be sure that Radley's chamber was open only to the known adherents of the Lutheran views. The members of this group were active and at times they caused some commotion in the University by affixing famous "libels and bills" upon the church doors during the night.²

How much Frith personally contributed to the

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 426,427.

2. Ellis, op. cit., 3rd series, I, 253.

efforts of the Reformation movement at Oxford is difficult to ascertain. Writing in 1533, he made references to his Oxford days in terms which suggest a great deal of activity. When Sir Thomas More declared that Frith was unable to give a reason against the doctrine of transubstantiation, Frith retorted, "When I was seven years younger than I am this day, I would have been ashamed if I could not have given an evident reason at the Austin in Oxford, before the whole University."¹ Perhaps Frith never dared to discuss the delicate doctrine of transubstantiation before the whole University, but he would not have hesitated to air his views in private. In the same writing in 1533, Frith referred to the Sacramental disturbance in terms of intimate familiarity.

And as touching quietness of conscience, I have known many that have sore been cumbered with it; and among all, a certain Master of Arts, which died in Oxford, confessed upon his death-bed, that he had wept, lying in his bed, an hundred nights within one year's space because he could not believe it, transubstantiation.²

Towards the end of 1527 the University authorities, alarmed by the increase of the Lutheran influence, began to suppress the energetic party. It all started when Thomas Garret,³ a former student of Magdalen Hall and acting assistant to Dr. Forman of All Hallows, Honey Lane, London, was suspected of selling forbidden books at

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 402.

2. Ibid., p. 410.

3. The whole account as recorded by Anthony Dalaber is contained in Foxe, op. cit., V, 421-427.



Oxford. As early as 1526 he was conveying Latin works on the Scriptures along with Tyndale's New Testament not only to Oxford and Cambridge, but also to the neighboring towns and especially to the Prior of Reading.¹ Orders were issued for his arrest and when efforts to find him in London failed, Wolsey sent directions for his arrest at Oxford. A friend, however, informed him of the Cardinal's intention and a plan was devised by the members of the Lutheran group whereby Garret would be able to escape. One of them, Anthony Dalaber, a student residing in Alban Hall, suggested that Garret go to his brother, the Rector of Stalbridge in Dorset who wanted an Oxford man as a curate. This would have been the perfect way for Garret to fade out of the picture and eventually take to the continent, but he determined not to continue on this course and accordingly, after three days journey, he returned to Oxford.

On the 21st of February, three days after his return, Garret was arrested in Radley's chamber and imprisoned in the Commissary's chamber. The next day he was to be sent to London. That evening, however, when the Commissary and others went to evensong, he managed to escape and quickly made his way to Gloucester College, where after failing to find a certain monk, he asked to be taken to Dalaber's chamber. Dalaber had just a day or so previously moved from Alban Hall to Gloucester College

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, Appendix Number VI. (Pratt's ed.)

and had not heard of Garret's return and subsequent capture. What happened at this meeting is told by Dalaber in what is one of the most dramatic and vivid 16th century documents.

And so, [according to Dalaber] as I was diligently reading in the book of Lambert upon Luke, suddenly one knocked at my chamber-door very hard, which made me astonished, and yet I sat still, and would not speak; then he knocked again more hard, and yet I held my peace; and straightway he knocked yet again more fiercely, and then I thought this: peradventure it is somebody that hath need of me; and therefore I thought myself bound to do, as I would be done unto: and so, laying my book aside, I came to the door, and opened it, and there was Master Garret as a man amazed (whom I thought then to have been with my brother), and one with him.¹

After listening attentively to Garret's story Dalaber gave him a coat in place of his gown and both prayed for the safety of Garret's departure. Dalaber continues:

And then we embraced, and kissed the one the other, the tears so abundantly flowing out from both our eyes, that we all-be-wet both our faces, and scarcely for sorrow could we speak one to another: and so he departed from me, appareled in my coat, being committed unto the tuition of our almighty and merciful Father.²

Dalaber then closed the door and took out his New Testament and kneeling in his study, he read the tenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel "...with many a deep sigh and salt tear", and offered up prayer for the little group of Oxford Reformers. After this he went to Cardinal's College to inform the leader, Master Clark, and the other members, of

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 422.

2. Ibid., V, 423.

the good news of Garret's escape. The next day, however, Dalaber was examined by the Prior of the Students, Anthony Dunstan, and later by Dr. Cottisford, Commissary, Dr. Higdon, then Dean of Cardinal's College, and Dr. London, Warden of New College. Dalaber told them of his experience with Garret, but instead of telling the truth with reference to the direction in which Garret went, he told a lie "to rid my godly brother out of the trouble and peril of his life."¹ Failing to get the desired information from Dalaber, Dr. Cottisford, the Commissary, consulted an astrologer who declared that Garret went towards London. (A unique revelation - for where else did most fugitives run!) Garret, however, was arrested in Bristol and returned to Oxford where he and Dalaber both bore a fagot.

While Garret was fleeing to Bristol, the University authorities made a thorough search for heretical books at Oxford. What happened on this occasion was related to Wolsey by Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, in a letter dated March 3, 1528:

There are a marvilouse sorte of bookes founde whiche were hydde undre the erth, and otherwise secretly conveyede from place to place. The chefe that were famlyarly acquaynted in this mater with Master Garrett was Master Clarke, Master Freer, Sir Fryth, Sir Dyott, Anthony Delabere.²

As a result of the search for books and the betrayal of twenty-two adherents to the reformed views by Dalaber,

1. Dalaber fails to mention that he betrayed twenty-two of his associates at the same time.
2. Foxe, op. cit., V, Appendix Number VI. (Pratt's ed.) The title "Sir" does not mean that Frith was ordained. "Sir" is used "...with the surname of the person, to designate a Bachelor of Arts..." Craigie, A New English Dictionary, p. 100.

Dr. Higdon, Dean of Cardinal College, arrested Clark, Sumner, Betts, Frith, Bayley, and Lawney. According to Foxe, they were -

...cast into a prison, within a deep cave under the ground of the same college, where their salt fish was laid; so that, through the filthy stench thereof, they were all infected, and certain of them taking their death in the same prison, shortly upon the same being taken out¹ of the prison into their chamber, there deceased.

It seems as though the University authorities and Bishop Longland interceded in behalf of the imprisoned and urged Wolsey to deal leniently with them. Most of the prisoners appear to have recanted and on a specified day they went in procession from St. Mary's to St. Frideswyde's, carrying faggots signifying the burning death which they had narrowly escaped. As they passed Carfax (the marketplace at Oxford) each cast a book onto the bonfire which had been lighted for that purpose.

What happened to Frith when all this was taking place? Foxe tells us that "Master Clark, Master Sumner, and Sir Bayley, eating nothing but salt fish from February to the midst of August, died all three together within the compass of one week."² After the death of these three men in August, Wolsey softened and wrote to the dean demanding the release of the other prisoners on condition they would remain within ten miles of Oxford. Frith was released, but upon "hearing of the examination of Dalaber

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 5.

2. Ibid., V, 5.

and Garret, who bare them faggots, went over the sea..."¹ One would assume that he went to the Continent immediately, but Mozley for no apparent reason suggests that Frith did not leave England before December, 1528.

There remains one point to be clarified. Westcott, a careful and accurate scholar, states that Frith carried a faggot along with the others at Oxford.² A modern writer commits the same error when he writes: "Bilney, Barnes, Bayfield, Frith, Crome, Latimer - all abjured; the heroic exception is Tyndale...."³ Frith, however, did not recant his opinions at Oxford! This is obvious because Foxe mentions each leader who recanted and omits Frith's name. Furthermore, Foxe says that when Frith heard the fate of Garret and Dalaber, how they abjured, he decided to leave for the Continent. Why did he leave if he did not want to escape recanting? He was released from prison not because he recanted, but because of the deaths of Clark, Sumner and Bayley. Recantation, no doubt, was staring him in the face, but he availed himself of the opportunity to flee before the fate, which befell so many of the brethren, would fall on him. In his final examination before the Bishop of London, not one word is mentioned which would lead us to believe that he ever recanted.⁴ Surely, if he had, his accusers would

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 5.

2. Westcott, History of the English Bible, p. 49.

3. Chester, Hugh Latimer, p. 82.

4. Foxe, op. cit., V, Appendix Number 22. (Pratt's ed.)

have mentioned it.

CHAPTER III

CONTINENTAL EXILE

A brief treatise, writ by Mr.
 patrick Hambleton, the
 first of our tyme that
 suffered in Scotland for
 the testimonie of Christ
 Jesus, translated by Mr.
 Frith, who shortly after
 suffered in England for
 the same cause, and by
 him named patricks
 places, conteyninge
 the pith of all
 doctrine.

The ^{Rom. 1} first shall lyue by faith/
 Newly imprinted at London by

1566

recolected Rom. 3

John Hryte vnto the Christian
Souldiers

Wheleso be yoe the father of our lord
Jesus Christ in his holy spirit dwelling
and pardons hymes, hathe shewed us in all vnto us
nesses vnto his sonne, to testifie the truth vnto the
faithfull; to save at the least some from the shames of
Antichrist w^{ch} leade to perdition; as ye may here
perceive by that excellent and well learned young
man, Patrick Hambleton borne in Scotland of a noble
progenie; w^{ch} to testifie the truth sought al meane,
and tolt upon him prythode (even as paul rai-
sed Timothe to witness the weak failes) y^e he
might be admittid to preache the pure word of
god. Notwithstanding assone as the chamberlaine &
other byshoppes of Scotland had perceived the
light beganne to shyne, w^{ch} dyscloide the darkness
they vnto in darkness, they laid handes on him &
because he woulde not deny his saviour Christ at
their instance, they burnt him to ashes. Now
Helesse yoe of his boundles merrey (as publysh to
the whole worlde, what a man the monster
had murdered) hath reprinted a litle treatise made
by this Patrick, which y^e ye lyt, ye may rally
Patrick's places. for it treateth partly of certayne
comen places, which knowne, ye have the path
of al admittit. This treatise have I turned in to
English tongue, to the profit of my nation: to whom
I beseech yoe your light, that they may fynde the
certeyne pathes of perdition, and returne to y^e
ryght waye which leadeth to lyfe everlasting
Amen

CHAPTER III

CONTINENTAL EXILE

While Frith was at Cambridge and Oxford he was known as one of the young leaders of the Lutheran leaven, but it was not until he arrived on the Continent that he began to flower into a reformer not unequal in many respects to Tyndale. On the Continent he had further opportunity of reading the works of the Master Reformers, Luther, Oecolampadius, Zwingli and Bucer but, most of all, here he enjoyed the experienced guidance of Tyndale, his "father in the faith." It would not, therefore, be too speculative to say that these years in Frith's life were the most important ones.

LOCATION ON THE CONTINENT

Before Frith decided to leave Oxford, he had in mind the Continent as his destination. The facts of the itinerary have eluded the historian, but from a knowledge of his future acquaintances, it would seem that he went to London, where Garret and the Christian Brethren had their headquarters. Here he may have met Humphrey Monmouth who was already helping Tyndale and others of the Merchant Adventurers. Passage to the Continent was easily arranged by them in strict secrecy, and in this manner Frith passed over the sea to Antwerp.

Antwerp was the logical destination for Frith. Tyndale had lived there for most of the time and Barnes had stopped there on his way to Wittenberg in 1528.

George Joye and Coverdale may have come about the same time as Frith. With brethren of like purpose and mind, Frith looked forward to his new home. Then too, of the cities of Europe, Antwerp was the best place to hide. It was the most populous city in Europe and full of traders from all over the Continent, making detection of English heretics a difficult undertaking. Antwerp was also a free city and not easily moved by the whims of the Emperor or his regent. The margrave and council were Catholic, and could be counted on to persecute wayward citizens, but they felt no duty to interfere in the beliefs of foreigners who brought them trade and profit.¹

Antwerp was the headquarters of the Merchant Adventurers, a group of English merchants who had been operating there for sometime. Books had been smuggled from Antwerp to England since 1525 or 1526 and by 1528 the trade had expanded to considerable proportions. The Merchants had chaplains such as John Lambert and later Rogers and they were extremely anxious to gain the friendship of the English exiles. It may have been here in Antwerp that Frith spent most of his exile, for all that is known of the city and his friends would point in that direction.

There was one who especially anticipated the coming of Frith at Antwerp. This was Tyndale who perhaps last saw him in London in 1524 and who, no doubt, desired him to join him as early as 1526. There is a curious

1. Maynard-Smith, Henry VIII and the English Reformation, p. 306.

passage in Tyndale's Parable of the Wicked Manon which almost certainly refers to Frith in disguised terms.

While I abode [awaited] a faithful companion, which now hath taken another voyage upon him, to preach Christ where I supposed he was never yet preached (God, which put in his heart thither to go, send his spirit with him, comfort him, and bring his purpose to good effect), one William Roye...came unto me and offered his help.¹

That Frith was the one awaited for is plain from what happened to him after Tyndale left for the Continent. Instead of going with Tyndale, Frith thought the opportunity offered by Oxford to me more inviting, especially since he and the Cambridge group were the first to bring the Reformation ideas to Oxford. Now, however, after a delay of three years the two were brought together at Antwerp.

There is, however, the possibility that Frith may have been located in Marburg for some time. On the basis of two suppositions older writers agreed that Frith and Tyndale were there from 1527 to 1530. The first stems from the fact that Frith translated the Latin theses of the young Scot, Patrick Hamilton. Since Hamilton was in Marburg in 1527 it was thought that Frith was there too. But the evidence against a contemporaneous Marburg residence with Hamilton is conclusive. In the previous chapter it has been demonstrated that the Oxford arrests in which Frith figured prominently occurred in 1528. Since Frith did not leave England until September 1528 (the earliest), he could not have met Hamilton who had left

1. P.S. Vol. I, p. 37; Greenslade,^(ed.) The Work of William Tindale, p. 118.

Marburg late in 1527 and was burned at the stake in February 1528, seven months before Frith left Oxford.

The other supposition arises from the fact that Frith's translation of Luther's Revelation of Antichrist was published by Hans Lufft who was believed to have lived in Marburg. But this has been questioned in recent years by the researches of Miss Kronenberg.¹ Mozley has delved into the matter in connection with several works by Tyndale which were printed with the same Lufft colophon, and argues persuasively against a Marburg origin.

A careful examination of type, woodcuts, ornaments and the like proves that this whole series of Lufft-Marburg books, whether written by Tyndale, Frith or others, really proceeded from a printer named John Hoochstraten. This man was printing at Antwerp under his own name in 1525-6, then for four years 1526-1530 he vanishes, just the very years in which the first Lufft-Marburg group is produced. Then from 1531 to early 1535 his name reappears first in Lubeck, and then in Malmo, where he becomes technical assistant to Pedersen, the translator of the Danish Bible; then from 1535 to 1540, during the reign of the second Lufft-Marburg group, he vanishes again; and finally he is found once more at Antwerp printing under his own name in 1540-3. It all fits together beautifully, and according to Miss Kronenberg who has been the chief unraveller of the mystery, there is no doubt about the identification. To print Lutheran books was a dangerous matter, as Endhoven had discovered; it might mean imprisonment, a heavy fine, loss of stock, banishment or even worse: and many printers therefore issued such books without name. Hoochstraten preferred to protect himself by a false name, and indeed he used two or three other pseudonyms besides that of Hans Luft.²

The two main props for the Marburg residence are swept away. But does that mean that Frith was not at

1. Het Boek, VIII, pp. 241-280.

2. Mozley, William Tyndale, p. 124.

Marburg at any time? There is no conclusive evidence that Frith remained in Antwerp all of the time. He may have gone to Marburg for a short time to study but this is purely inferential since his name does not appear on the register.¹ Foxe records some interesting conversation between Frith and his guards as he was taken to Cranmer to be examined in 1533. In answer to the guard's question why he desired to escape from Oxford in 1528 and now refuses to accept the offer to escape, Frith replies, "Marey, there was and is a great diversity of escaping between the one and the other...Before, I was indeed desirous to escape, because I was not attached, but at liberty; which liberty I would fain have enjoyed for the maintenance of my study beyond the sea, where I was reader in the Greek tongue, according to St. Paul's counsel."² What actually is meant by "reader in the Greek tongue" is uncertain but if it means that he went to a University on the Continent, the safest and most likely place would be at Marburg. Perhaps he went to Marburg to study unofficially under Francis Lambert who was well known in England through the reading of his commentaries on Scripture.

If Frith was not at Marburg when Hamilton was, it may be asked how he became interested in Hamilton's theses? One biographer of Tyndale supposes that he was in Marburg when Hamilton was there and from him Tyndale

1. See letters to the Librarian of Marburg University in Mombert, English Versions, pp. 111-115.

2. Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 698-699.

obtained a copy of the theses¹ which Frith later translated and published. From the preface to "Patrick's Places" it would seem that some such transmission of the documents occurred. After lamenting the death of Hamilton, Frith writes: "nevertheless, God of his bounteous mercy (to publish to the whole world what a man these monsters have murdered), hath reserved a little treatise..."² Perhaps these theses were "reserved" by Tyndale and given to Frith who was extremely interested in this Scottish martyr of like mind and age.

The question arises whether Frith remained in Antwerp in 1529-1530 or whether he went with Tyndale to Hamburg. Mozley has advanced convincing arguments to accept Foxe's account that Tyndale went to Hamburg about the end of February 1529, that he was ship-wrecked on the way, losing his manuscripts of the translated Pentateuch, and that from March to December he and Coverdale retranslated the Pentateuch. Among the reasons which Mozley advances in favor of a Hamburg residence is that Tyndale was in danger in Antwerp and would find freedom in Hamburg where the Reformation had been accepted as recently as February 1529.³ With regard to Frith there is no mention that he was in Hamburg with Tyndale, but if Tyndale found it dangerous to remain in Antwerp, so would Frith be

1. Mozley, op. cit., p. 125.

2. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 563. (Underlining by this writer)

3. Mozley, op. cit., pp. 145-152.

subject to interrogation by the King's agents because of his illegal departure from Oxford. Furthermore, it does not seem possible that Tyndale would not avail himself of the excellent learning of Frith, who knew both Hebrew and Greek and excelled Coverdale in both, especially after meeting severe disappointment with the garrulous Roye. One objection to Frith's Hamburg stay would be the criticism that Foxe does not mention Frith, but only Coverdale as a helper of Tyndale in Hamburg. This, however, may be accounted for by the fact that when Foxe wrote this he may have received, as Mozley suggests, this information from Coverdale himself who was living in London between 1559-1568. It is hardly likely that Coverdale would have mentioned Frith thirty years after his death. The natural thing would be to mention merely Tyndale and himself.

One would hope to find positive evidence that Frith helped Tyndale with the translation or at least the retranslation of the Pentateuch by a comparison of quotations from their works. Unfortunately, the quotations from the Pentateuch in Frith's works are meager and therefore it is impossible to prove conclusively Frith's hand in the matter. This much should be admitted, however, that since the Pentateuch was completed before Tyndale arrived in Hamburg, it would follow that Frith had nothing to do with the original translation but could have helped only with the retranslation.

The only factual evidence that Frith resided for

a time outside of Antwerp while on the Continent is supplied by both Vaughan and Joye. Vaughan wrote in 1531 that Frith was in Holland, presumably Amsterdam, where he had married. He adds that Frith may have been forced into the marriage because of his poverty.¹ His marriage is verified by the statement of Tyndale who wrote to Frith in 1532 regarding his impending martyrdom: "Sir, your wife is well content with the will of God, and would not, for her sake, have the glory of God hindered."²

ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE LIKE-MINDED

The chief companion of Frith on the Continent was William Tyndale. After four and one-half years of separation the two Reformers met again in Antwerp to carry on the work of the Reformation. One of their activities was the continuation of Tyndale's translation of the Scriptures. A problem, however, arises in determining how far Frith assisted Tyndale. Tyndale, it will be remembered, translated the New Testament in the second half of 1525 and it seems, therefore, that Frith had nothing to do with it. Tyndale, according to Mozley, had begun translating the Pentateuch in the early part of 1527 and when Frith arrived in the autumn of 1528, the Pentateuch was nearly completed. Then, too, the second edition of the New Testament did not come out until 1534, two years after Frith left for England. It would seem

1. L. and P. Henry VIII, V, 112, paper 246.

2. Foxe, op. cit., V, 132.

that only one book of the Bible was translated with the help of Frith - the short book of Jonah in 1530 and printed in 1531. Yet there seems to be evidence that Frith helped Tyndale in translating the Scripture while he was on the Continent. Writing in 1533, Frith offered to Sir Thomas More the proposition which Tyndale made a short time before.

But this hath been offered you, is offered, and shall be offered. Grant that the word of God, I mean the text of Scripture, may go abroad in our English tongue, as other nations have it in their tongues, and my brother William Tyndale and I have done, and will promise you to write no more: if you will not grant this condition, then will we be doing while we have breath, and show in few words that the Scripture doth in many; and so at least save some.¹

It is not possible to assert more than Frith does in the above quotation. How far he helped Tyndale remains unknown even after a diligent comparison between Scripture quotations found in Frith's writings and the various translations from Tyndale's hand.

The quality of the friendship sustained between these two men is evident from a letter written to Frith in May 1533.

Brother Jacob, beloved in my heart! there liveth not in whom I have so good hope and trust, and in whom my heart rejoiceth, and my soul comforteth herself, as in you; not the thousandth part so much for your learning, and what other gifts else you have, as because you will creep alow by the ground, and walk in those things that the conscience may feel, and not in the imaginations of the brain; in fear, and not in boldness; in open necessary things, and not to pronounce or define of hid secrets, or things that neither help nor hinder, whether it be

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 339-340. (Underlining by this writer)

so or no; in unity, and not in seditious opinions...¹
 Tyndale continues in a humble vein which has been cited as proof of his lack of ability. But it was only for the purpose of contrast - to reveal Tyndale's high opinion of Frith, both as a Christian and a scholar.

Finally, if there were in me any gift that could help at hand, and aid you if need required, I promise you I would not be far off, and commit the end to God. My soul is not faint, though my body be weary. But God hath made me evil favoured in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechless and rude, dull and slow witted; your part shall be to supply what lacketh in me; remembering that as lowliness of heart shall make you high with God, even so meekness of words shall make you sink into the hearts of men.²

Another of Frith's companions on the Continent was Richard Bayfield who in some ways was his most important associate. For Foxe says that Bayfield "...was beneficial to Master Tyndale, and Master Frith; for he brought substance with him, and was their own hand, and sold all their works,..."³ Bayfield was perhaps the most active of the book agents traveling between England and the Continent. After abjuring before the Bishop of London in 1528, he went to the Continent. How many times he traveled back and forth between England and Antwerp is not known. Foxe reports that in the summer of 1530 he made a crossing to Colchester with a load of books. A few months later he returned with a load to St. Catherines, London but this time Sir Thomas More confiscated the lot. During Easter 1531 he brought a third lot of books to

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 134

2. Ibid., V, 134.

3. Ibid., IV, 681.

London where they were sold and distributed. He was arrested in London and on December 4, 1531 he was burned at Smithfield.

About 1530 John Lambert left England and went to Tyndale and Frith in Antwerp. He had been converted by Bilney and studied at Cambridge where Frith first met him. Foxe says that he was an excellent Greek and Latin scholar and that he had translated several Latin and Greek treatises. A linguist such as Lambert would be welcome in the philological society composed of Tyndale, Frith and others. After remaining for a year or more in Antwerp as chaplain to the English Merchants, Lambert was betrayed by Barlow, perhaps the Jerome Barlow who with William Roye wrote the "Burial of the Mass", a satire directed against Wolsey. He was dealt with kindly by Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and released in 1533 shortly after Warham's death. However, Lambert soon fell into the hands of the authorities for disputing with a London priest, Dr. Taylor, on the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Taylor conferred with Barnes who suggested that Lambert be cited before Cranmer. Finally in 1538 Lambert was burned at the stake for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, adopting the same arguments which Frith had already advanced.¹

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 181-250.

Wriothesley, Chronicle of England, I, 88-89.

Among other associates may be mentioned Robert Barnes who was a confirmed Lutheran, a hot head, and ill disposed to any one who did not share with him all the opinions of Luther. When Tyndale wrote to Frith in 1533, he warned him that "Barnes would be hot against you" if anything but the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper were set forth. By 1538 Barnes had gone so far in detestation of a non-Lutheran view that he was instrumental in causing the death of John Lambert. From what is known of Barnes between his Cambridge days and his death in 1540, there is little in his ways and thinking which would have attracted an independent thinker like Frith. Yet Frith did all he could to conciliate him and to retain his friendship. He even offered to accept Barnes's view of the Sacrament, if More would eliminate the practice of worshipping the host.¹

INFLUENCES FROM THE CONTINENTAL REFORMERS

Many of the English exiles during the decade following the posting of Luther's theses made their way directly to the great Reformer. Tyndale and Roye had gone in 1524 and Barnes followed in 1526. But it is highly doubtful that Frith went to Wittenberg. When Garret was arrested at Oxford, a list of books was found which indicates what the young English Reformers were reading. By 1525 the books of Francis Lambert, Oecolampadius, Bucer and Zwingli were supplementing the books of Luther, and it

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 421.

seems that "as knowledge of Lutheranism grew in England, the English people rejected its distinctive tenets."¹ To be sure, Frith retained a firm hold on Luther's doctrine of "justification by faith", supreme authority of the Scriptures and the great central doctrines of the faith. But he differed with Luther on the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Frith was too much an independent thinker to be the mouthpiece of Luther as Barnes proved to be. How he viewed the writings of Luther is illustrated in his argument with More who accused Frith of borrowing all of his ideas from the German Reformers.

Luther [Frith writes] is not the prick that I run at, but the Scripture of God. I do neither affirm nor deny anything because Luther so saith, but because the Scripture of God doth so conclude and determine. I take not Luther for such an author that I think he cannot err, but I think verily that he both may err, and doth err, in certain points, although not in such as concern salvation and damnation; for in these, blessed be God! all these whom ye call heretics do agree right well.²

All this adds up to one fact that while Frith was not adverse to borrowing ideas from Luther, he did so only after comparing them with Scripture.

E.G. Rupp in his excellent book The English Protestant Tradition remarks that it has not been shown whether Frith was the English popularizer of the views of Oecolampadius or not.³ It is true that Frith had more

1. Moore, Lectures on the Reformation, p. 143.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 342.

3. Rupp, op. cit., p. 10.

of an affinity with the doctrines of the Rhineland Reformers than he ^{had} did with Luther - especially on the distinctive doctrines of the Lord's Supper and baptism. In tracing the influence of Oecolampadius on Frith one finds a reference to Oecolampadius which suggests a more than passing familiarity with his works. And to the casual reader it suggests that Frith adopted Oecolampadius' views and sent them forth in an English dress. Nothing could be further from the truth. Oecolampadius had collected the opinions of the Patristic Fathers on the meaning of the words "This is my Body" and set them forth in a book in 1525 entitled the "True and Estimable Explanation of the Words of the Lord, This is my Body, etc, according to the Oldest Christian Writers".¹ Frith used this book in writing his work on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in 1533, but he merely quoted from Oecolampadius who "hath well declared...[the Patristic opinions] in his book...and some of their sayings I shall allege anon."² Of some thirty-nine quotations from the Fathers found in Frith's work on the Sacrament, he borrows nine from Oecolampadius, all of which are against the doctrine of transubstantiation. He accepted the mediating view of Oecolampadius in broad outline but it was Ratramnus' work which influenced him.

1. There is a rare copy of this work in the New College Library, Edinburgh. It was published in 1525 together with a work by Zwingli.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 361.



Castle to

the Christian reader

107a

The Revelation of Antichrist.

Antichrist or whom or compa-
red to gooder Charles acts
and our true father
the

W. H. L.



W. H. L.

Since there is not much difference between the teachings of Ratramnus and Bucer¹ it is difficult to determine whether Frith was also influenced by Bucer. He does not mention Bucer, nor are there any traces of Bucer's teachings which cannot be attributed to Ratramnus whom Frith openly avows following. Frith, however, must have been acquainted with the controversy raging between the Lutherans and the Zwinglians, and may have watched, as Tyndale did, its progress to the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. Bucer, who figured prominently in the controversy, was more the type of person to attract Frith than Luther or Zwingli. Frith was always willing to preserve unity at any cost even to the point of accepting the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper.² His main desire was not only to maintain unity among the Brethren, but he also desired unity with the Roman Church. Bucer, as it is well known, desired to bring Luther and Zwingli together by formulating a mediating view of the Lord's Supper, which he thought both would accept. In their desire to unify the Brethren, Bucer and Frith stood on common ground.

TRANSLATIONS AND WRITINGS OF REFORMATORY WORKS

When Frith arrived on the Continent in 1528 he set about to translate Luther's Revelation of Antichrist,

1. Smyth, Cranmer and the Reformation under Edward VI, p.66. See also Bells, "The Genesis of Martin Bucer's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper" in Princeton Theological Review, 1926 for a discussion of Bucer's views.

2. Foxe, op. cit., V, 10 footnote.

a treatise directed against the Pope and the Church.¹ To this Frith added a preface called "An epistle to the Christian Reader" in which he reveals himself as no mediocre controversialist.² Beginning with a general introduction of the evangelical doctrine of salvation through Christ by faith, Frith dismisses the argument based on works by quoting the words of Christ, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."³ After disarming the reader of a powerful argument, Frith eases into the subject of Antichrist by pointing out that anything which opposes itself to God is antichrist. Thus there are principally three antichrists: the Devil, the flesh and the world. The Devil is the tempter and one should not give place to him in the time of weakness. Rather one should retreat to the "seat of Mercy" to find strength from Christ who successfully overcame the "fair flattering and delicious enticements" of Satan. The flesh as antichrist opposes the Spirit and continually wages war in the soul of man. By the "flesh" one is to understand not only the desires of the flesh, but everything one does, thinks or speaks which is contrary to the Spirit of God. Christ has delivered man from the power or reign of sin but there is continual tension between the flesh and the Spirit which never disappears until death. Consequently, man should always be praying the prayer "Lord, forgive us our sins", and also seeking

1. The Revelation of Antichrist is not reprinted in Frith's Works, but the Epistle to the Christian Reader and the Antithesis both are included in Russell's edition, The Works of the English Reformers (1831).

2. Frith, op. cit., pp. 457-473.

3. John 6:29.

the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the antichrist of the flesh.

The third antichrist is the world. Not that the physical earth is against God, but all the people of the earth who are carnal and carnally minded. In the world there are two categories of antichrists; one are they who possess authority and power, the other are they who are in subjection. The former are stubborn in opposing God, the latter oppose God through error. Into the first category fall most of the clergy who are false servants of God. They not only rob the people but keep the Word of God from them, for if the Word of God were allowed, the people would know how corrupt they are. That the clergy are antichrist is evident from the argument drawn from Scripture. As Ishmael persecuted Isaac, so does the unspiritual persecute the spiritual. Thus, those who persecute as the clergy do, are unspiritual and therefore antichrist. Scripture further substantiates this argument, for Christ and the apostles were persecuted. "And I think verily", Frith adds, "that so long were the successors of the apostles good Christians, when they were persecuted and martyred, and no longer. So impossible it is that the word of the cross should be without affliction."¹ The conclusion of the matter is that the clergy live on the wrong side of the fence of persecution, because instead of suffering persecution as the Bible teaches, the Church persecutes - and consequently she is antichrist.

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 470.

One can imagine how the impartial reader of the 16th century was sufficiently prepared and enticed to read the Revelation of Antichrist which followed the preface. But the reader would find more convincing arguments at the close of the book in a small treatise by Frith which he entitled, "Antithesis, wherein are compared together Christ's acts and our holy Father the Pope." This was an epitome of the Revelation gathered by Frith. In seventy-eight comparisons between the actions of the Pope and Christ, Frith summarizes Luther's arguments which support his contention that the Pope is antichrist. Two examples are quoted here:

Christ was poor, saying, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay his head. The Pope and his adherents are rich, for the Pope saith, Rome is mine, Sicilia is mine, Corsica is mine, etc. And his adherents have also fruitful possessions, this every man knoweth.

Christ full lowly and meekly washed his disciples' feet. The Pope saith, the emperors and kings shall kneel and kiss my feet, and is not ashamed to express it in the law.¹

This work was one of the mysterious Luft-Marburg books. The colophon reads "At Malborow in the lande of Hesse/The XII day of Julye/An no MCCCCC XXIX by me Hans Luft". As it was pointed out in the discussion of the Luft-Marburg books, the real place of publication was Antwerp by Hochstraten. The authorship of the book was equally disguised, for the preface reads: "Richard Brightwell unto the Christian Reader". Sir Thomas More was not

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 300.

fooled by it and in his "Supper of the Lord", he refers to "...father Frith, under name of Brightwell in the reuelacion of Antichrist".¹ Evidently, Frith was too honest to put his name to a work which was in the main Luther's, but then he could not expect the work to circulate unsuspected if Luther's name were appended. Hence he used the pseudonym, "Richard Brightwell".

The Revelation of Antichrist appeared in England soon after its publication. The bishops were furious and denounced it along with several others. It is difficult to determine the dates of these denunciations, but it is possible that Tunstall issued his in the latter part of 1529. Since it was issued while he was Bishop of London, it could not have originated after February 21, 1530 when he was transferred to Durham.² Consequently, the first notice of the Revelation of Antichrist was about the end of 1529. On May 24, 1530, Henry VIII called an assembly of prominent churchmen for the purpose of combating and suppressing heretical books. Sir Thomas More and Bishop Tunstall were the leading figures behind the "Publick Instrument" which listed the specific errors from seven different books, including the Revelation of Antichrist.³

1. More, op. cit., p. 1129. The use of the term "father Frith" does not imply the ordination of Frith. More was fond of alliteration and he used it whenever possible. For example, when referring to Frith's treatise on the Sacrament, More said it wasn't worth the "peeling of a pear".
2. Cooper, Athenae Cantabrigienses, I, 199.
3. Foxe, op. cit., V, 571-599.

According to the authorities, there were thirty-eight errors in the Revelation of Antichrist. Ten of the thirty-eight were to be found in the "Epistle to the Christian Reader" written by Frith. For example, the following quotations were taken from Frith's work and pronounced false and heretical in the "Publick Instrument".

- VIII If a man say, "Then shall we do no good works?"
I answer as Christ did: "This is the work of
God to believe in him whom he hath sent."
XI Sin cannot condemn us, for our satisfaction is
made in Christ who died for us.¹

Among the works translated by Frith were the Latin theses of Patrick Hamilton. Patrick Hamilton had the distinction of not only being one of the first students to enroll at the new University of Marburg, but also the first to set forth a list of theses to be defended before the University. These theses fell into the possession of Frith who not only translated the original theses, but, on internal evidence, enlarged upon them by adding Scripture texts and material from Hamilton's notes which he had prepared to defend his theses.² These theses contained evangelical statements of doctrine and were named by Frith, "Patrick's Places: for [as he adds] it treateth exactly of certain common places, which known, ye have the pith of all divinity." From Frith's preface it seems that the work was published during his lifetime, but there are no surviving copies. It was later reissued by

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 583, 585.

2. Watt, "Hamilton's Interpretation of Luther, with Special Reference to 'Patrick's Places'" in Cameron (ed.), Patrick Hamilton: First Scottish Martyr of the Reformation.

an unknown printer under the title: "Dyuers frutful gath-
eringes of scrypture concernyng fayth and workes."¹ Then
about 1534 Redman reprinted the work under a similar title
and this edition was used by Gough in constructing his
primer.² Foxe also preserved a copy in his Acts and Mon-
uments.³

Besides his activities as translator, Frith was
busily engaged in producing original works. One of the
greatest literary contributions of his was the work en-
titled: A Disputation of Purgatory. Since the work is not
dated, only an approximate one may be given. In the pre-
face, Frith declares that he first seriously thought of
writing this work about the autumn of 1530. At that time
he wrote to friends in England asking them to send cur-
rent literature and Sir Thomas More's Supplication of
Souls. These arrived on St. Thomas' Day, December 21, in
1530 and Frith began his writing shortly after this. The
next time we hear of the Disputation of Purgatory is in
connection with Tyndale's Answer to More. Stephen Vaughan,
a merchant adventurer of Antwerp and Cromwell's agent to
persuade Tyndale back to England, wrote to Cromwell, and
mentioned Tyndale's Answer to More. Vaughan suggested
that Tyndale withhold the work until Cromwell's intentions
were known, but Tyndale replied that he "...feared lest

1. Pollard, Short Title Catalogue - 12732.

2. See Butterworth, The English Primer 1529-1545, pp. 127-8.

3. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 563ff.

one that had his copy, would put it very shortly in print."¹ George Joye in his Apology states that Frith first wrote it for Tyndale and saw it through the press at Amsterdam, but Joye is not a reliable writer. Nevertheless, Tyndale's statement to Vaughan reveals the fact that Frith had the Answer to More on May 19 and from Vaughan's letter of the 20th, it is evident that Frith was in Holland. But neither the Answer to More nor the Disputation of Purgatory were printed in Holland; both, according to the unanimous consent of the bibliographers, were printed in Antwerp. Thus, it seems that Frith brought both manuscripts back to Antwerp sometime in June, 1531 and published them together. We may conclude that Frith wrote his work on purgatory during the first few months in 1531, probably in February or March. The publisher, according to Miss Kronenberg, was Symon Cock of Antwerp.²

The occasion of the controversy over purgatory began with the publication in the spring or summer of 1529 of Simon Fish's A Supplication for Beggars.³ In this work the author charged that the clergy were responsible for the poverty of the people because of their numerous exactions of fees for most clerical services. Aside from the general and sweeping charges, Fish concocted a dilemma which even Sir Thomas More found difficult to answer.

1. L. and P. Henry VIII, V, 112, paper.246.

2. Nijoff-Kronenberg, Nederlandsche Bibliographie, II, Part 2, p. 407.

3. See Arber's edition of A Supplication for Beggars.

Either there is no purgatory, or the Pope is a tyrant for not releasing all the souls from purgatory regardless of the money involved. Sir Thomas More replied with A Supplication of Souls in the autumn of 1529. Fish's general attacks on the corrupt state of the clergy^{are} dismissed, and More advances Scripture to support purgatory. He concludes that everyone who believes in God and in the immortality of the soul, must also believe in purgatory. This idea was taken up by More's brother-in-law, John Rastel, who published A New Booke of Purgatory on October 10, 1530, in which he sought to prove purgatory by natural reason. Frith took up the controversy from here and by the spring of 1531 his refutation of Rastel, More, and Fisher was printed.

Frith thought that Rastel's book was the most vulnerable of the three, and so he set out to confute him first. Rastel was educated at Oxford and eventually became a lawyer. In 1504 he married Elizabeth More, sister of Sir Thomas More, and lived a rather hectic life until 1514 when he settled down and began practicing law and printing books. In 1517, however, he fitted out a ship to explore the new world, but failed in the adventure because his shipmaster cheated him and the crew mutinied. He then turned to theology and wrote the above work on purgatory.¹

1. Reed, Early Tudor Drama, p. 3-27.

Rastel as a lawyer and layman was no match for Frith. Not only did Frith demonstrate Rastel's anti-Scriptural reasoning, but he also revealed his unorthodoxy according to the standards of the Schoolmen. Where Rastel set out to give seven arguments for purgatory, Frith produces "seven times seven" arguments against purgatory.

In the second part of the treatise Frith answered Sir Thomas More's A Supplication of Souls by refuting each of his supports from Scripture. The third part of Frith's treatise was directed against Bishop Fisher. In 1523 Fisher wrote A Confutation of the Lutheran Assertions in which he referred to purgatory in several of the articles. Frith undertook to answer these articles which dealt mainly with the Patristic support of purgatory. Thus Frith, in three divisions, answers his opponents who sought to base purgatory on natural reason, Scripture, and the testimony of the Fathers.

In the process of attacking the doctrine of purgatory, Frith scored a point against More and Fisher by exploiting their differences. Perhaps he had in mind Fisher's assertion to Luther:

I see that John Huss lives again in you. But God in His Providence has mercifully provided this remedy, that you can never agree together...Blessed be God who reduces you to confusion, by that very spirit of division that you strive to introduce into the Church.¹

1. Fisher, Confutatio Assertionis Lutheranae, Art. 30.

But if disagreement produced confusion, Fisher and his colleagues were not excluded, for the illustrious layman, Sir Thomas More and the Bishop of Rochester (Fisher) were both ~~all~~ found disagreeing on some points of purgatory. Frith quickly pointed out the disagreements between More and Fisher.

...they dissented between themselves in their probation; for M. More saith, that "there is no water in purgatory"; and my Lord of Rochester saith, that "there is water;" Master More saith, that "the ministers of the punishment are devils", and my Lord of Rochester saith, "that the ministers of the punishment are angels;" Master More saith, "that both the grace and charity of them that lie in the pains of purgatory are increased"; my Lord of Rochester saith, "that the souls in purgatory obtain there neither more faith, nor grace, nor charity, than they brought in with them:"¹

The book on purgatory was received in England with mixed feelings, but it was readily distributed by the Christian Brethren among the "known men". They were particularly interested in this theological refutation of purgatory which fortified their own attacks. But the authorities were not so enamored with this work. The elderly Sir Thomas More was shocked when he heard that Frith, only twenty-eight years of age, had not only attempted to refute his writings, but also those of Rastel and the aging Fisher. With words that reflect a certain amount of injured pride, More indignantly said:

...before I go ferther with Tindale, I purpose to aunswere good yong father Fryth, which nowe sodainly commeth forth so sagely, that iii olde men, my brother Rastell, the byshoppe of Rochester and I, matched with father Fryth alone, bee nowe but very

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 89.

babes, and as he calleth us insipientes. But thus goeth the worlde forth betwene Fryth and us. He encreaseth I se well as fast as we decay.¹

But Frith had answered More's arguments from Scripture so forcefully, that More sought refuge in the controversy over the doctrine of the Church. For if the Church were proved to be true and infallible then all her doctrines would be true.

But when Tindall is ones in that article touchinge the church confuted: then hath Fryth alreadye concerning purgatory clerely loste the fielde, and al his welbeloued booke is not worth a button, though it wer al as trewe as it is false. For then is the fayth of the church in that point infallyble, or at the lest unculpable, wer there scripture therefore or not.²

Yet More proposed to

...goe farther wyth yonge father Fryth, and touch yf god wyll euery parte of his freshe painted booke, and so shal I pluck of I trust the most gloriouse fethers from his gai pecokes taile, that I shall leaue hym yf he haue wytte and grace, a lyttle lesse delyghte and lyking in hym selfe then he semmeth nowe to haue, whyche thynge hath hytherto made hym for to stande not a lyttle in his owne lyght.³

But the direct refutation of Frith's book never came.

Perhaps it was because Frith soon engaged in a controversy over the Lord's Supper which More thought more important to answer.

Fisher did not answer Frith's work, but Rastel did. What he wrote has not survived, but Reed found on the back of one of the sheets of depositions in the Court

1. More, Works, p. 355.

2. Ibid., p. 355.

3. Ibid., p. 355.

of Requests case, Rastel V. Walton, a reference to Rastel's rejoinder. It may have been a scrapped beginning for it reads as follows:

The cause why yt Rastell made his boke of purgatory wtout aleggyng any textes of holy scripture.

I marvell gretely that my broder Fryth doth hold this¹

Here it breaks off, but it is certain that he wrote a rejoinder to Frith, for in 1532 Frith wrote another book entitled: An other boke against Rastel named the subsedye or bulwark to his fyrst boke made by John Frithe presoner in the Tower. This work was short but full of evangelical doctrine. Frith endeavored to answer Rastel's criticisms and added arguments in support of his former work on purgatory. Bale says that Rastel was converted by Frith and Rastel's subsequent history corroborates this. After serving in Westminster Hall from 1529 to 1532, Rastel again began printing books. In the summer of 1533, he took as his sub-tenant, John Gough, who had been suspected of aiding in the sale of evangelical works in 1528. He increasingly associated himself with the Protestants such as Bale and Marshall², and in 1536 he died a confirmed Protestant. The conversion of Rastel is one illustration of Frith's ability as a controversial writer, and few there were who could claim even one convert in this period of overheated controversy.

Besides the work on purgatory, Frith wrote

1. Reed, op. cit., p. 221.

2. Ibid., p. 26.

another shorter work during the Continental exile. In February 1531 the disturbed clergy in Convocation failing in their battle against the King, decided to vent their anger by oppressing the Protestants. They went so far as to direct their indignation against the body of a dead man. This was an old acquaintance of Tyndale, William Tracey, squire of Toddington in Gloucestershire. Tyndale thought very highly of him and described him as "...a learned man, and better seen in the works of St. Austin twenty years before he died, than ever I knew doctor in England."¹ The clergy despised the fact that Tracey made a will, dated October 5, 1530, in which he proclaimed his faith, that in Christ alone was there salvation. He also refused to provide for any prayers or masses to be said after his death as the custom was. This will was circulated widely and caused the clergy one year later to have his body exhumed and taken from consecrated ground. To satisfy their desires completely, they burned the disinterred body.

Tyndale and Frith decided to publish a commentary on the will. Since the body was disinterred about the month of March, 1532, and since Frith left the Continent in July 1532, he composed the work sometime during the early summer of 1532. It was never published by Frith, and it was not discovered until after Tyndale's arrest in May 1535. When it was discovered, perhaps by

1. P.S., III, p. 279.

Rogers, it was still in Frith's handwriting.¹ Both expositions by Tyndale and Frith were printed in 1535 from Hoochstraten's printing press.

The work contains much evangelical doctrine in defence of Tracey's will. Two passages are worth quoting which are the best expositions of the relationship of faith to works occurring in the works of Frith.

There is no man doubteth but that faith is the root of the tree, and the quickening power out of which all good fruits spring; therefore it is necessary that this faith be present, or else we should look for good works in vain; for without faith it is impossible to please God.

.....
 And therefore faith, as a quickening root, must ever go before, which of wicked maketh us righteous and good, which thing our works could never bring to pass. Out of this fountain spring those good works which justify us before men, that is to say, declare us to be very righteous, for before God we are verily justified by that root of faith; for he searcheth the heart, and therefore this just judge doth inwardly justify or condemn, giving sentence according to faith; but men must look for the works, for their sight cannot enter into the heart, and therefore they first give judgment of works, and are many times deceived under the cloak of hypocrisy.²

Frith differed with Luther on the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but on the doctrine of "justification by faith", he was Luther's disciple.

1. P.S., Tyndale, III, 271.

2. Frith, op. cit., pp. 251-253.

CHAPTER IV

MISSIONS TO ENGLAND

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MISSIONS TO ENGLAND

It was not Frith's intention to remain on the Continent as an exile. Though he proved to be Tyndale's best helper and closest friend, he felt his main work was with the people in England. He did what he could with his pen to publicize evangelical doctrine, but he felt it was time to return. Whatever else influenced him to return, it is certain that the primary reason was his desire to make the Word of God known in England.

It is not possible for him that hath his eyes and seeth his brother which lacketh sight in jeopardy of perishing at a perilous pit, but that he must come to him and guide him, till he is past that jeopardy; and at the least wise, if he cannot come to him, yet will he call and cry unto him, to cause him ^{to} choose the better way, except his heart be cankered with the contagion of such hatred that he can rejoice in his neighbour's destruction. And even so is it not possible for us which have received the knowledge of God's word, but that we must cry and call to others, that they leave the perilous paths of their own foolish fantasies; and do that only to the Lord that he commandeth them, neither adding anything nor diminishing. And therefore, until we see some means found by the which a reasonable reformation may be had on the one part, and sufficient instruction for the poor commoners, I assure you I neither will nor can cease to speak; for the word of God boileth in my body like a fervent fire, and will needs have an issue, and breaketh out when occasion is given.¹

ENCOURAGEMENTS LEADING TO THE FIRST MISSION

There were certain encouragements which partially motivated Frith to return. Between 1529 and 1531 England underwent considerable change which prognosticated better things to come. The "King's Matter" was the most important

1. Frith, Works, p. 339.

issue by 1529 and Wolsey was deeply implicated in the struggle with Rome. Because of his failure to secure the Pope's consent for an annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine, Wolsey lost the Royal favor. By November 1529 he was no longer Chancellor and titular head of the Pope's subjects in England. Although he had not been a great persecutor, he was, nevertheless, firm in resisting the advance of heresy, as Frith well knew from the Oxford arrests. Now that he was gone, the English Reformers in exile looked to England with new hope and expectation.

Another occasion for encouragement to the exiles on the Continent was Parliament's actions in 1529. This Parliament, sometimes referred to as the "Reformation Parliament", convened in November, 1529 and the first session lasted six weeks. Opposition to the Church was unconcealed and Parliament passed several acts designed to correct some of the more glaring abuses of the clergy. Acts related to taxes on mortuaries and legacies were passed with little trouble. While the clergy watched in dismay, the Reformers rallied and thought Parliament was bent in the direction of reform.

There was even further encouragement from the King. When the clergy were adverse to his intentions of marrying Anne Boleyn, he thought the Protestants would be of use to him. When Simon Fish's Supplication for Beggars came to the King's attention in 1529, he was so favorably impressed that he promised to protect him if

he would return from the Continent.¹

The same year Henry read Tyndale's Obedience of a Christian Man and, according to Strype, he said of it, "This book is for me and all the Kings to read".² It is little wonder that Henry thought Tyndale desirable as an ally and accordingly he persuaded him to return through Vaughan. The King's attitude toward the Reformers was not unknown to the clergy. Rumors spread that the King openly favored the writings of Tyndale and his companions. For example, on May 14, 1530 Bishop Nix wrote to Archbishop Warham that "...divers saith openly in my diocese that the King's Grace would that they should have the said erroneous books, [Luther's and Tyndale's] and so maintaineth themselves to the King."³ Such rumors, however erroneous, may have reached the English Reformers on the Continent and revived their hopes of a Reformation in England at last.

The King's secretary, Cromwell, also favored the Protestants. He had distinguished himself in the employment of Wolsey, especially as his agent in suppressing monasteries in 1524 to provide for Wolsey's College at Oxford. After Wolsey's fall he became secretary to the King and exerted tremendous influence over him. In 1530, under the King's orders, he dispatched Vaughan to

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 657.

2. Strype, op. cit., I, 177.

3. Pollard, Records of the English Bible, p. 161.

Antwerp with instructions to persuade Tyndale and Frith to return to England. By the time Vaughan appeared in Antwerp, Tyndale's Practice of Prelates was circulating in England, and the King no longer desired Tyndale's return. For in this book Tyndale attacked the King's desire for a divorce.

If the King had abandoned the idea of having Tyndale return, he thought Frith not completely won over to Tyndale's doctrine. Accordingly, Henry desired the return of Frith to England. This is known from the letters written between Cromwell and Vaughan. The first notice appeared sometime after April 18, 1531 in a letter written by Cromwell.

As touching Fryth, mentioned in your said letter, the King's Highness hearing tell of his towardness in good letters and learning, doth much lament that he should in such wise as he doth, set forth, shew and apply his learning and doctrine in the semination and sowing such evil seed of damnable and detestable heresies, maintaining, bolstering, and advancing the venomous and pestiferous works, erroneous and seditious opinions of the said Tyndale and other... Wherein his Highness, like a most virtuous and benign prince having charge of his people and subjects, being very sorry to hear tell that any of the same should in such wise run headlong and digress from the laws of Almighty God and wholesome doctrine of holy fathers, into such damnable heresies and seditious opinions; and being ever inclined, willing, and greatly desirous to foresee and provide for the same; and much desiring the reconciliation of the said Fryth, firmly trusting that he be not so far as yet inrooted in the evil doctrine of the said Tyndale and others, but that by the grace of God, loving, charitable, and friendly exhortations and advertisements of good people, he may be called again to the right way; hath willed me to write unto you that ye, therefore, according to his trust and expectation will, with your friendly persuasions, [sic] admonitions, and wholesome exhortations, counsel and advise the said Fryth, if ye may conveniently speak with the same,

to leave his wilful opinions and like a good Christian to return unto his native country, where he assuredly shall find the King's Highness most merciful, and benignly, upon his conversion disposed to accept him to his grace and mercy.¹

The above dispatch reached Vaughan at Bergen-op-Zoom on May 18th and two days later Vaughan replied:

As touching a young man being in these parts named Fryth, of whom I lately advertised your Majesty, by my former letters, and whom your Royal Majesty giveth me in commandment, with friendly persuasions, admonitions, and wholesome counsels to advertise to leave his wilful opinions and errors, and to return into his native country, I shall not fail, according unto your most gracious commandment, to endeavour, to the utmost of my power, to persuade him accordingly, so soon as my chance shall be to meet with him. Howbeit I am informed that he is very lately married in Holland, and there dwelleth, but in what place I cannot tell. This marriage may, by chance, hinder my persuasions. I suppose him to have been thereunto driven through poverty, which is to be pitied, his qualities considered.²

Vaughan received his instructions from Cromwell before he left for the Continent in December 1530. By February he had communicated with Frith and had made Cromwell's desires known. Although these letters were dated late in the spring, Frith knew personally of the invitation to return as early as February 1531.

DATE OF FRITH'S FIRST MISSION

Most of the writers who have written about Frith have failed to notice that Frith made a trip to England in the early spring of 1531. Foxe writes that after Frith left Oxford he returned to England "after two years".³ If Frith went overseas in the last

1. Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, V, 114, paper 248; Merriman, Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell, I, 338.
2. Ibid., V, 112, paper 246.
3. Foxe, op. cit., V, 5.

quarter of 1528, the early spring of 1531 would be just a few months more than "two years", which is reasonably accurate for Foxe's chronology.

There is definite evidence, however, found in the register of Stokesly, Bishop of London. "...[Frith] was in England on the quadragesima after the space of two years...[i.e. two years before 1533]."¹ Lent in 1531 began on February 22 and continued a few days beyond the end of March. Frith, therefore, was in England in February and March 1531.

PURPOSE OF FRITH'S FIRST MISSION

Doubtless the efforts exerted by Henry and Cromwell to attract Frith to England played a major role in the young men's return. However, Frith had a specific purpose in returning. He came to ^{inspect} ~~check~~ the secret book distribution of the Christian Brethren. Much of his time was also spent in visiting those interested in the Reformation in the eastern counties and the area of the Chiltern Hills. The information which Frith gathered concerning England was needed by Tyndale who longed for a reliable report of English affairs after an absence of six years.

The real purpose of Frith's return is connected with his appearance in Reading. According to Foxe it was thought that Frith desired the Prior of Reading to help him financially. Frith also intended to persuade the Prior to return with him to the Continent.²

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, Appendix 22. (Pratt's Edition)

2. Ibid., V, 5.

The Prior had been of Protestant persuasion as far back as 1528, for he was one of Garret's customers on the Oxford-London book selling circuit.¹ The Bishop of Lincoln wrote to Cardinal Wolsey on March 3, 1528 informing him of the heresy at Oxford and at the monastery in Reading.

...This Garrott also hath (Ifeare) corrupted the monastery of Redyng, for he hath dyverse tymes sent to the Prior ther suche corrupte bookes by a poore scholler which hathe confessed the same, to the nombre of thre score or above, and receyved money of him for them. Howe the said Prior hath used those bookes and with whome I knowe nott... And that the Prior of Redyng shortely be looked upon, and his bookes to be brought in, itt is very necessary.²

Thus it seems that the Prior also acted as an agent for Tyndale and Frith as well as the publishers of other reformatory works.

The authorities arrested the Prior shortly after and placed him in prison. In September 1529 he was still in prison. Stephen Gardiner, secretary to the King, in a letter to Wolsey refers to the Prior.

The King's Highness willed me to write unto your Grace, that suit being made unto him in favour of the Prior of Reading, who for Luther's opinion is now in prison and hath been a good season at your Grace's commandment, that unless the matter be most notable and very heinous, he desireth your Grace, at his request, to cause the said Prior to be restored to liberty, and discharged of that imprisonment.³

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1. Strype notes that Ralph Bradford delivered some New Testaments to the Prior and that he shortly afterwards was arrested. This must have been in 1528 just before Garret's arrest. Strype also makes the error of attributing the translation of the New Testament to Frith instead of Tyndale. Strype, op. cit., I, 504.
 2. Foxe, op. cit., V, Appendix VI. (Pratt's Edition)
 3. Ibid., V, Appendix VI. (Pratt's Edition)

Although there is no record of the Prior's release, it seems probable that he was released and that he resumed the forbidden task of selling contraband books. If this is what happened, it is little wonder that Frith desired to visit the Prior who would be in a position to help him.

EPISODE AT READING

After Frith arrived at Reading he met with unfortunate circumstances. Instead of contacting the Prior, he was taken for a vagabond and clapped in the town stocks. After persistently refusing to reveal his identity, he became hungry and weak. Finally, he decided to call for the local schoolmaster who was Leonard Cox, an Eton and Cambridge graduate. When Cox came to the prison, Frith began to lament his captivity in Latin.

The schoolmaster, [according to Foxe] by and by, being overcome with his eloquence, did not only take pity and compassion upon him, but also began to love and embrace such an excellent wit and disposition unlooked for, especially in such a state and misery.¹

Frith could not have called for a better man to relieve his distressed condition. Indeed he may have known Cox before, for he had been intimately acquainted with Erasmus, and had translated his paraphrase of the Epistle to Titus into English. It was also known that he defended the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. Perhaps their "conferring more together on many things" included a discussion of Erasmus and the dangerous but popular topic of Lutheran doctrine. At any rate,

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 5.

Foxe says that:

They fell from the Latin into the Greek, wherein Frith did so inflame the love of that schoolmaster towards him, that he brought him into a marvellous admiration, especially when the schoolmaster heard him so promptly by heart rehearse Homer's verses out of the first book of the Iliad.¹

Even the classical languages had utility value. In Frith's case his knowledge of Greek and Latin became the key which unlocked the stocks and set him free. The schoolmaster, "complaining of the injury which [the magistrates] did show unto so excellent and innocent a young man,"² eventually obtained his release.

ORDERS FOR FRITH'S ARREST

Although freed from the Reading prison, Frith was not free to travel among the "brethren". For by March 1531 Sir Thomas More had issued orders for his arrest as a heretic. There has been much misunderstanding on the part of those who defend Sir Thomas More at this point. They point out that Frith could not have been arrested in July, 1532 under More's orders as Foxe alleges because More gave up the Great Seal in May of the same year. Therefore, they conclude that Foxe is wrong.³ But from Foxe's account it appears that Sir Thomas More issued the orders in the early spring of 1531 and left them in force until Frith should be arrested. That More issued the warrant for his arrest in 1531 is supported by the

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 5-6.

2. Ibid., V, 6.

3. See Taft (ed.) The Apologye of Syr Thomas More, pp. 299-300.

sequence of Foxe's account.

Thus, Frith, through the help of the schoolmaster, was freely dismissed out of the stocks, and set at liberty without punishment [in 1531]. Albeit this his safety continued not long, through the great hatred and deadly pursuit of Sir Thomas More, who, at that time being chancellor of England, persecuted him both by land and sea, besetting all the ways and havens, yea, and promising great rewards, if any man could bring him any news or tidings of him.¹

Doubtless, in Frith's case More acted within the bounds of his duty as Chancellor of England, but one wonders how the author of Utopia could stoop to the level of persecution. Froude who perhaps was as little tolerant of More as More was of Frith, aptly characterizes More:

...the philosopher of the Utopia, the friend of Erasmus, whose life was of blameless beauty, whose genius was cultivated to the highest attainable perfection was to prove to the world that the spirit of persecution is no peculiar attribute of the pedant, the bigot, or the fanatic, but may co-exist with the fairest graces of the human character.²

One of More's first biographers says that he had been "troublesome to heretics", and he had "done it with a little ambition;" for "he so hated this kind of men that he would be the sorest enemy that they could have, if they would not repent."³

Fortunately for Frith, he escaped and made his way to the east coast where he took a ship to Antwerp.

NECESSITY FOR A SECOND MISSION

Frith was back on the Continent for little more

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 6.

2. Froude, History of England, I, 550.

3. More, Life of More, p. 211.

than a year when he decided that he must return to England. What prompted him to return the second time is not altogether clear. Certainly the transactions of Parliament guided by the iron hand of the King were encouraging. By these the Pope's powers were being shorn while the King was acquiring new powers which culminated in the "submission of the clergy" on May 15, 1532. Although Henry's intent was only to expell the power of Rome and not its doctrine, the Reformers viewed the trend as in their favor.

Along with the Parliamentary changes, the change in chancellors may have lured Frith to England. Sir Thomas More, who had issued orders for Frith's arrest during the spring of 1531, had resigned the Great Seal in May 1532. Consequently Frith may have thought the danger was passed.

Although these events may have looked good to the Reformers, yet they were not without harsh attendant circumstances. For whenever the King suppressed the powers of the Pope and clergy, he always counteracted his measures with a fresh indication of his loyalty to strict Catholic doctrine. The best and surest way of doing this was by checking the Protestants. Not one of the early Reformers was free from persecution; and not one was strong enough to withstand the blows without abjuring - except Tyndale, and Frith. Bilney had abjured in 1527 and on August 18, 1531 he was burned at Norwich. Robert Barnes, the other leader of the Cambridge Reformers, abjured at St. Paul's in 1526. Even the King's highly

avored Hugh Latimer abjured in April, 1532. The followers of the Reformation were perplexed and sadly in need of leadership which would not waver over the threats of the stake.

Other lesser known Reformers met the same fate. Richard Bayfield, the friend of Tyndale and Frith and their best book salesman, was arrested and burned on December 4, 1531. He had abjured in 1528 and now suffered as a relapsed heretic. These abjurations were not pleasing to Tyndale and Frith who may have sensed the dangerous implications which these falterings had on the faithful "brethren". One more abjuration and some drastic measure would have to follow. This abjuration came when James Bainham, lawyer, friend and active book salesman for Tyndale and Frith, was arrested in December 1531. He had been under suspicion since he married Simon Fish's widow. After several examinations before Sir Thomas More and Stokesley, Bishop of London, Bainham began to weaken and on February 8, 1532 he signed the abjuration in the presence of Foxford, Stokesley's Chancellor. He was finally released on February 17, 1532, not without first bearing his faggot at St. Paul's on the previous Sunday. What happened following his release is told by Foxe.

[Bainham] was released and dismissed home...where he had scarce continued a month, but he bewailed his fate and abjuration; and was never quiet in mind and conscience until the time he had uttered his fall to all his acquaintance, and asked God and all the world forgiveness, before the congregation in those days, in a warehouse in Bow-lane. And immediately, the next Sunday after, he came to St. Austin's, with the New Testament in his hand in English, and the Obedience of a Christian Man in his bosom, and stood up

bef

there before the people in his pew, there declaring openly, with weeping tears, that he had denied God; and prayed all the people to forgive him, and to beware of his weakness, and not to do as he did; "for", said he, "if I should not return again unto the truth (having the New Testament in his hand), this word of God would damn me both body and soul at the day of judgment." And there he prayed every body rather to die by and by, than to do as he did; for he would not feel such a hell again as he did feel, for all the world's good.¹

Bainham was arrested, sentenced, and burned at Smithfield on April 30, 1532. There was much of the heroic nature in a man who finally faced his conscience squarely, but this did little to restore the faith of the weak "brethren" who were looking for at least one to be absolutely certain of his faith and to be steadfast to the bitter end.

Who, it may be questioned, was most likely to be called on in 1532 to lead the bewildered "brethren"? Tyndale was the greatest leader and best able to provide the necessary leadership. But he had not the personal contact necessary to assume leadership since he had been away from England seven years and his knowledge was only second hand. Furthermore, he dared not go, for he would have been arrested and burned as soon as he had landed on English soil. In the eyes of the English Reformers, there was only one person left to whom the "brethren" could turn. This was John Frith. He would revive the spirit of the disillusioned and give a new tone to the cause of God and His truth. Although there would be danger, the cause of Christ and the Reformation was worth all the

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 702.

perils.

It should be noted that when Bainham could no longer suppress the dictates of his conscience because of his ignoble abjuration, he went first to confess his wrong to the "congregation in those days, in a warehouse in Bow-lane".¹ In the first chapter something was written concerning the "known men" of London and it was noted that the "known men" were growing in numbers especially as a result of the introduction of Tyndale's New Testament along with the theological works of Tyndale, Frith, and Barnes. It seems that by 1532 there were sufficient "known men" and supporters of the Reformation to form a congregation in a warehouse - a bold substitute for the home in which the "known men" of the twenties dared to gather. This congregation and perhaps a few more scattered about were lacking in leadership and they would be anxious to have Frith in their midst. On July 25, 1532² Frith was back in England, counseling with the "brethren" and providing the leadership which only Tyndale or Frith could have supplied.

FINAL ARREST

Although Sir Thomas More was no longer Chancellor, his orders of the previous year to arrest Frith were still in force. Frith, however, visited the "brethren" in London, telling them of recent events on the Continent, and urging them to stand fast in the evangelical doctrine. In order to elude the authorities Frith changed his garments

1. Foxe, op. cit., IV, 702.

2. Ibid., V, Appendix 22. (Pratt's Edition)

frequently and shifted from house to house among hospitable "brethren". But even these measures did not insure his safety, for at Milton Shore near Southend in Essex, he and the Prior of Reading, were arrested as they were about to take ship for Antwerp in the early part of October 1532. According to More, Stokesley's servants were aided by the King's officers in arresting them. They were brought back to London by the King's officers and lodged in the Tower of London.¹ Stokesley would have placed him in the Bishop's prison, but Cromwell and the King wanted him in the Tower. Because of this Parsons has suggested that Frith committed a political offence by trying to take the Prior of Reading overseas. And this, according to Parsons, is the reason why Frith was taken to the Tower, where heretics were not usually kept.² Cromwell may have had his hand in this matter also for he still thought that Frith could be persuaded to offer some service to the King, who was willing to accept Frith's repentance and to restore him to full Royal favor. At any rate Cromwell visited Frith shortly after his arrest.³

1. More, Apologye (ed. Taft) p. 100.

2. Parsons, Of Three Conversions, p. 47.

3. Letters and Papers Henry VIII, V, 1467.

CHAPTER V

LAST DAYS AND MARTYRDOM

6.12.5.7
2

An other boke against Rastel

named the subledye or bulwark
to his fyrst boke/made by
Jhon freithe pre-
söner in the
Tower.



Awake thou that sleepest and
sonde vppe from deeth/and
Christe shall geue the
lyght. Ephesians. v.



CHAPTER V

LAST DAYS AND MARTYRDOM

The arrest of Frith marked a decisive turning point in his life and activities. Hitherto he had waged a literary war with the Tudor Traditionalists mostly from the other side of the English Channel. But the first real test of his opinions and the ability to defend them came during his imprisonment in the Tower of London. A lesser man would have laid down his mantle in the face of death, but Frith bravely stood his ground and carried on a vigorous defense of the Reformed views to the very end.

LIFE IN THE TOWER

In some respects life in the Tower was not unpleasant for Frith. He was not without some of his old friends to encourage him and to pass the long hours with enjoyable as well as profitable talk. We learn of this from a letter written by John Whalley to Cromwell, dated 23rd October 1532. The contents reveal that the Prior of Reading, the parson of Honey Lane and Christopher Coo were in the Tower with Frith.¹ The prior was a friend of long standing and an intimate acquaintance of Frith. The parson of Honey Lane was his old friend, Thomas Garret, the bookseller who first introduced books from the Continent to the "brethren" at Oxford. Christopher Coo was a merchant of Protestant persuasion who had been arrested in connection with the book trade.² There is

1. L. and P. Henry VIII, V, 1467.

2. Ibid., V, 1664.

strength in friendship which the solitary prisoner misses; and it may have been this friendship which made the long cold hours bearable.

Frith enjoyed some privileges which were denied other less fortunate fellow prisoners. His wit and demeanor partially explain this for the lieutenant of the Tower was attracted to him. Edmund Walsyngham, the lieutenant, wrote the following to Cromwell on 21st October, 1532.

...The Old monk lieth with Dr. Coke; the other three, as yet lie together. Two of them wear irons. Frythe wears none. Although he lacks irons, he lacks not wit nor pleasant tongue. His learning passes my judgment. As you said, it were a great pity to lose him if he may be reconciled....1

There is little doubt that Cromwell favored Frith and the adherents of the new religious views. It was Cromwell's doing that Frith was kept in the Tower and out of the hands of the bishops.² That Cromwell was friendly to the Reformers is verified by an incident in connection with the case of Richard Hilles. An "ordinary citizen" was early interested in the Reformed opinions and in 1532 when he was in the service of a merchant tailor, he wrote a treatise on Abraham's justification by works, about which another young man had asked his opinion. This treatise fell into the hands of Stokesley, Bishop of London, and his master and another merchant tailor urged him to recant. He refused and consequently his master dared not keep him for fear of the bishop, and no one

1. L. and P. Henry VIII, V, 1458.

2. Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 696.

else would employ him. He and his mother appealed to Cromwell.¹ It seems he arranged for the boy's former master to take him back, for three years later he was living unmolested in London and had become employed by the Merchant Taylor's Company.² Cromwell, it seems, was intent upon protecting the Reformers from the bishops.

Frith was also favored by his keeper, Phillips, "...who, upon the cautylene of his owne worde and promyse, lett hym go at liberty in the nyght to consulte with godly men."³ One of his nocturnal visits took him to the home of John Petite who was so astonished to see Frith that he "...was in dowght whether it was Mr. Frythe or a vision: no lesse dowghting, nor otherwyse, than the Apostles, when Rode the mayde brought tydynges that Peter was gott owt of prison."⁴

There was a reason behind Frith's visit. Petite was a member of Parliament in 1529 and a wealthy merchant who "gave muche to the poore, and specyally to poore prechers, suche as then wer on this syde the say and beyonde the say: and in his debte books these desperatte debts he entered thus, - "lente unto Chryste".⁵ This

1. Clode, The Early History of the Merchant Taylors' Company, II, 351-354.

2. Jeffries-Davies V.C.H. London, p. 261.

3. Nichols, Narratives of the Days of the Reformation, p.27.

4. Ibid., p. 27.

5. Ibid., p. 28.

perhaps was the reason why Chancellor More personally searched his house for forbidden books and, although he found none, yet he had the Lieutenant take him to the Tower. This occurred sometime during the imprisonment of Bilney, for "Petite, being imprisoned under Mr. Bylney" was allowed by Phillips to remove a board so that they could dyne and suppe togyther, and to cheere one and othere in the Lorde..."¹ This occurred in the early summer of 1531 for by August 19, 1531 Bilney met his fiery death at Norwich. Evidently, Petite was in the Tower for over a year and finally released in the autumn of 1532. He died shortly after his release since his will was proved on January 24, 1533. It was therefore in October 1532 when Frith visited him at his home and conferred with him concerning the progress of the Reformed views among the "brethren".

Although the keeper of the Tower allowed Frith freedom at night, he was not allowed much during the day. In fact he was in perpetual fear that his superiors would pay him an unannounced visit. Writing to Rastel, Frith complained:

...the truth to say, we play not on even hand; for I am in a manner as a man bound to a post, and cannot so well bestow me in my play, as if I were at liberty, for I may not have such books as are necessary for me, neither yet pen, ink, nor paper, but only secretly, so that I am in continual fear both of the lieutenant and of my keeper, lest they should espy any such thing by me; and therefore it is little marvel, though the work be imperfect, for whensoever I hear the keys ring at the doors, straight all must be

1. Nichols, op. cit., p. 27.

conveyed out of the way (and then if any notable thing had been in my mind, it was clean lost);...¹

Frith, however, was permitted to receive letters from his friends. According to More, Tyndale and Joy wrote and encouraged him to remain firm in the faith. One of the letters which Tyndale wrote in January 1533 contained sober and wise advice. He admonished Frith to uphold the fundamentals of the faith, and let alone the more intricate points of doctrine. Especially was he warned not to stir up controversy over the Lord's Supper.²

CONTROVERSIES

Tyndale's advice to refrain from controversy on the Lord's Supper arrived too late. In October or November 1532 Frith inadvertently was drawn into controversy with Sir Thomas More. Frith had been asked his views on the Sacrament by one of the "brethren". After discoursing at some length with the brother, Frith tells us that:

...he desired me to entitle the sum of my words, and write them for him, because they seemed overlone to be well retained in memory. And, albeit I was loth ~~to~~ ^{sic} to take the matter in hand, yet, to fulfil his instant intercession, I took upon me to touch this terrible tragedy, and wrote a treatise...³

Although the treatise has not survived, an outline of its contents may be found in Frith's second treatise on the same subject. Three points were

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 242.
2. Foxe, op. cit., V, 132-134.
3. Frith, op. cit., p. 322.

elaborated upon:

First, I proved unto him that it [i.e. transubstantiation] was not article of our faith necessary to be believed under pain of damnation. Then I declared, that Christ had a natural body, even as mine is, (saving sin), and that it could no more be in two places at once than mine can. Thirdly, I showed him that it was not necessary that the words should so be understood as they sound, but that it might be a phrase of Scripture, as there are innumerable. After that, I showed him certain phrases and manner of speakings, and that it was well used in our English tongue; and finally, I recited after what manner they might receive it according to Christ's institution, not fearing the froward alteration that the priests use contrary to the first form and institution.¹

The above treatise was circulated among the "brethren" in manuscript form. A certain "brother" was incautious and permitted one William Holt, a tailor, who pretended genuine interest in the contents, to borrow the manuscript for further study. Instead, he immediately took it to Sir Thomas More who had employed a network of spies for the purpose of uncovering the secret book trade among the Christian Brethren. So effective was More's underground methods, that two more copies were brought to him.²

Although Frith's work was not printed, Sir

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

2. Rogers, The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More, p. 440. Frith replies to More: "...if it be so that his master-ship received one copy, and had a couple of copies more offered in the mean while, then may ye be sure that there are many false brethren, which pretend to have knowledge, and indeed are but pickthanks, providing for their belly..." Frith, op. cit., pp. 336-337.

Thomas More set out to refute it in the form of a letter entitled "A letter of syr Tho. More Knyght impugnynge the erronyouse wrytyng of John Fryth agaynst the blessed sacrament of the aultare",¹ and dated December 7, 1532. It is the least controversial of More's works and it is free of the scurrilous abuse which disfigures most of the controversies at this time.

What More thought of Frith's work was summarized in two sentences.

How be it, a wors than this is, though the wordes be smoth and fayre, the devyll, I trow, can not make. For herein he ronnethe a great way beyond Luther, and techeth in few leuys shortely, all the poyson that Wyclyffe, Huyskyn, Tyndale, and Zuinglius haue taught in all theyr long booke before, concernyng the blessed sacrament of the aultare,...²

After identifying Frith with the leading heretics, More proceeds to answer his work on the Sacrament. The main arguments center around the literal interpretation of the words "this is my body". From this text More concludes that Christ is actually present bodily in the sacrament. Frith's allegorizing, according to More, is only the product of his own reasoning, rather than a conclusion from the comparison of Scriptures. Although this is supposed to be a letter, More draws out his arguments to such length that even he admits that the letter has developed into a book. But in spite of the letter's length, the author skirts around the main arguments and the

1. Rogers, op. cit., pp. 436-464.

2. Ibid., pp. 441-442.

foundational argument of Frith's work he never touches. This was the argument that transubstantiation should not be regarded as an article of faith. Besides omitting any reference to the main argument, More relies on the argument of seniority and throughout his work he refers to Frith as "this yong man".

More's treatise was published shortly after December 7, 1532. Only a few copies were released by the publisher, for More thought it necessary to stop publication. Frith sought a copy but could not as much as see one. When Frith was examined privately at the home of Stephen Gardiner on December 26, 1532, he first saw a copy of the work.¹ Finally one of his friends who had copied the work out in longhand presented it to Frith.

Because of the fact that More stopped publication of his work the rumor was circulated among the "brethren" "that he [More] is ashamed of his part, and for that cause doth so diligently suppress the work which he printed..."² This was a sore point with More who labored to free himself of this charge in his Apol-ogy, written about Easter, 1533. His explanation of why he suppressed the printing of this work is this:

And for bycause that hys boke was not put abrode in prent, I wolde not therefore lette myne runne abrode in mennes handes. For as I have often sayde, I wolde wysse that the comon people sholde of suche

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 323.

2. Ibid., p. 323.

heresy never here so myche as the name.¹

More, however, did send copies to those whom he thought had seen Frith's treatise.

More's strategy, however, would have worked had Frith been content to allow his former treatise alone to circulate among the "brethren". But he was displeased that More should answer his treatise which was intended for the "brethren". For they were acquainted with the spiritual eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper, but now needed instruction in the outward eating only. Frith, therefore, was forced to take up his pen again but this time for the purpose of writing a full treatise, including the spiritual nature of the sacrament, as well as a detailed refutation of More's letter.

Refuting More was not a new task for Frith. Two years before he had undertaken to refute More's Supplication of Soules and now sometime in March 1533 he wrote "A Book made by John Frith, Prisoner in the Tower of London, answering unto M. More's Letter, which he wrote against the first little treatise that John Frith made concerning the Sacrament of the Body and the Blood of Christ". In this treatise Frith began by drawing attention to the fact that More never touched his original argument against transubstantiation. Frith had written that the Old Testament prophets were assured of salvation through their projected faith in Jesus Christ

1. Taft (ed), Apology, p. 139.

who was promised as the Redeemer. So too those who come after Christ's period are saved because of faith in Him. Therefore transubstantiation could not be an article of faith. Frith's reasonable arguments were not accepted in those days because the slightest inclination towards lessening the power of the Church produced fiery retorts and long arguments. Frith had taken the field when he roundly charged More of this evasion:

This was the foundation of my first treatise, that he hath left unshaken, which is a great argument that it is very true; for else his pregnant wit could not have passed it so clean over, but would have assoiled [sic] it with some sophistical cavillation, which by his painted poetry he might so have coloured, that at the least he might make the ignorant some appearance of truth, as he hath done against the residue of my first treatise, which, nevertheless, is true, and shall so be proved.¹

After a thorough reading of both treatises of More and Frith, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Frith had the edge on More. More evaded the issue by demanding exact quotations from Frith who had little opportunity to produce citations in prison. He also labored to refute Frith by lengthy arguments. In his second treatise, Frith produced the citations and kept his arguments short and to the point. The second work of Frith only provoked More and if another attack had not reached him earlier, he would have answered Frith

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 325.

again.¹

This new work was entitled "The Supper of the Lord after the True meaning of the VI of John and the XI of the First Epietle to the Corinthians, and incidently in the exposition of the Supper is confuted the Letter of Master More against John Frith." It bears the date April 5, 1533 and was printed ostensibly from the house of Nicholas Twonson of Nurnberg. Basically, it was a reinforcement of Frith's ideas and a bitter attack on Sir Thomas More. The authorship of this treatise was kept secret and some, including More, thought that Tyndale, Joye or a third person was the author. But a careful examination points to Tyndale as author.² He no doubt withheld his name because Frith was being tried and it would not help him if Tyndale were to write in his defense. But Tyndale's arguments are not as forceful as Frith's and the impartial critic would be prone to say that More was happy to side step Frith's treatise by answering the inferior one by Tyndale. To be sure, More had promised in

1. More, op. cit., p. 1066. "That that Sacrament is both the very flesh of Christ as well as a figure, I shall ferther declare you in my booke against Frithes aunswere to my pistle. With which booke (wer his ones come in print which is already sent over to be printed) I shall God willing well make all hys Englyshe brethren se and perceyue hys folly, that list not willingly to continue fooles and winke."

2. Mozley, op. cit., p. 253.

the Supper of the Lord¹ that he would answer Frith also, but Frith's friends waited in vain, for Sir Thomas More soon fell into trouble with the King over the Royal Supremacy and this left little time or inclination to answer Frith's work.

During his imprisonment, Frith was also engaged in a milder controversy with George Joye. Joye had received a letter from one of the Christian Brethren asking him why he translated Isaiah's prayer in two different ways in his publications, first of the Hortulus Animae of 1530 and in his translation of the Book of Isaiah in 1531. On this occasion Joye took the opportunity of expounding his view on the resurrection. A copy of the contents of this letter reached Frith in the Tower, and he, thinking that Joye's opinion would breed controversy and dissension among the "brethren" wrote to Tyndale, asking him to silence Joye. Tyndale spoke to Joye who then turned to Latimer for his opinion. This is all contained in a letter of Joye's to Latimer and dated April 29, 1533.

Sir Wm. Tindal received a letter from John Frith, who was offended that I wrote secretly to one that asked me a question why I translated the prayer of Esale not all alike in the Hortulus and the prophet, wherein I show by the diversity of translations what profit may come thereof, sc. that souls departed sleep not nor lie idle till Doomsday, as Martin Luther and the Anabaptists say, and as Frith and Tindal would. I desire you to see this letter, for it is so painful to me to write that I could not leave any copy with me. Ye shall have it among the brethren. I cannot tell his name that asked me the question and unto whom I sent the letter by Wm. Hill,

1. More, op. cit., p. 1066.

Mr. Cusen's servant. Get it, read it, and send me your judgment, for Frith thinks it will breed dissensions. I doubt not that souls departed live, as will be seen by Mark 12, 2 Cor. 5, Phil. 1, John 23. The bearer, Henry Smith, will get it for you. I do not forget your good mind towards me, and was sorry when I heard of that fire that ye suffered, of which Paul speaks, I Cor. 3, to see your work burned before your face. Be of good cheer, Mr. Latimer. Paul suffered as much when he saw his dull Galatians bewitched. God can bring them again. This is the fate of those who lead Christ's unruly flocks. Write to my Lord of Canterbury and animate him in his office. He is in a perilous place.¹

The background to this dispute originated with the Reformers' arguments concerning prayers to the saints. To enforce their arguments against this some of the Reformers taught that the saints were not in heaven. When asked where the saints were, some, especially the Lutherans, responded that the souls sleep during the interval between death and the Resurrection. Joye opposed the Lutheran idea of soul sleep by denying a physical resurrection of the body. However, he made the mistake of assuming that Tyndale and Frith agreed with Luther on this point. But the truth is that both Frith² and Tyndale³ rejected the doctrine of soul sleep.

In his preface to the revised New Testament of 1534, Tyndale summarizes Joye's views and tells something of Frith's interest in the matter.

Moreover ye shall understande that George Joye hath had of a longe tyme marvelous ymaginacions aboute this worde resurreccion in that it should be

1. L. and P. Henry VIII, VI, 402.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 192. Chester in his biography of Latimer (p. 94) is wrong in charging Frith with the doctrine of "soul sleep".

3. Tyndale, Answer to More, p. 180.

taken for the state of the soules after their departinge from their bodyes and hath also (though he hath been reasoned with therof and desyred to cease) yet so even his doctryne by secret letters on that syde the see and caused great division amonge the brethren. In so moche that John Frith beyng in preson in the toure of London a lytle before his death wrote that we shuld warne him and desyer him to cease and wolde have then wrytten agaynst him had I not withstonde him. Therto I have been sence informed that no small number thorow his curiosite utterly denye the resurreccion of the flesshe and bodye, affirminge that the soule when she is departed, is the spirituall bodye of the resurreccion and other resurreccion shall there none be. And I have talked with some of them myselfe so doted in that folye that it were as good perswade a post as as to plucke that madnes oute of their braynes. And of this all is George Joyes unquyet curiosite that hole occasion whether he be of the sayde faccion also or not, to that let him answer him selfe.¹

WRITINGS

Although Frith was handicapped by his imprisonment in the Tower, he still found it possible to write. Besides the reply to Rastel and the two treatises on the Lord's Supper, Frith wrote three other treatises.

The first is entitled by Foxe, "A Treatise Made By Said John Frith while he was Prisoner in the Tower of London, anno M.D. XXXII called A Mirror, or Glass, To Know Thyself." Although the year 1532 appears in the title, the treatise was written in the first quarter of 1533. For in one place Frith refers to More's remarks on predestination which occur in More's letter of December, 1532. The substance of the work is not very weighty and perhaps for this reason it was never published as a single work. Foxe, to my knowledge, was the first to

1. Tyndale, The New Testament (1534) Preface.

print it together with the works of Tyndale, Frith and Barnes in 1573. Besides the argument against More's conception of predestination, Frith indulges in some social criticism by directing his attacks against the religious orders. The gist of his polemic is the old criticism that the members of the monastic orders are not fulfilling their spiritual duties of preaching and ministering to the people and consequently they ought not to be supported by the people.

Of more interest and importance is "A Letter which John Frith wrote unto the faithful followers of Christ's Gospel", written during the first quarter of 1533, and first published by Foxe in 1573. This letter was written to the Christian Brethren warning them of the impending persecution by the authorities. These were well timed words, for Tyndale admonished Frith in letters which have not survived, that, according to More, "all the brethren loke what shall become of hym [Frith], and that uppon hys spede hangeth all theyr hope."¹ It is apparent that Frith had already assumed leadership of the Christian Brethren, and that he was directing them from the Tower.

The last treatise which Frith wrote while in the Tower was entitled "A Mirror, or Looking Glass, wherein you may behold the Sacrament of Baptism described". Although the work is short, it contains an able defense

1. Taft, (ed) op. cit., p. 102.

of the Reformed view of baptism.

THE KING'S INTERVENTION

During the first five months of his imprisonment in the Tower, Frith entertained hopes of receiving a Royal pardon. Since the death of Warham on August 22, 1532, Henry was bent on having Cranmer consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. After obtaining the Pope's consent, Henry had Cranmer consecrated on March 30, 1533. The King's matter came to a climax when Henry married Anne Boleyn in January 1533. During the same month Audley, who was not hostile to the Reformers, was made Chancellor, succeeding Sir Thomas More. These were the King's doings and it is no little wonder that Frith hesitantly wrote:

And, albeit that the King's grace should take me into his favour, and not to suffer the bloody Edomites to have their pleasures upon me; yet will I not think that I am escaped, but that God hath only deferred it for a season, to the intent that I should work somewhat that he hath appointed me to do, and so to use me unto his glory.¹

It is ironic that the one person whom Frith believed would release him, was the one who brought on his death.

The details of the King's intervention are given by Foxe who in turn received them from Louthe^d, after the first edition of the Acts and Monuments appeared. According to Foxe, Gardiner instigated a plan whereby Dr. Currein, ordinary chaplain to Henry, was to call the King's attention to Frith's protracted imprisonment. During Lent Dr. Currein preached a sermon before Henry in which he drew

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 259.

the King's attention to the growth of the "sacramentaries" (i.e. the name given to those who objected to a carnal presence of Christ in the Sacrament). As proof of his charge, he said, "It is no marvel though this abominable heresy do much prevail amongst us; for there is one meaning Frith now, in the Tower of London, so bold as to write in the defence of that heresy, and yet no man goeth about his reformation."¹

Although Henry would countenance opposition to Rome, he would not allow tampering with the Sacrament. He immediately ordered Cromwell and Cranmer "forthwith to call Frith unto examination, so that he might either be compelled to recant, or else by the law, to suffer condign punishment."²

This personal act of cruelty on the part of the King has not been sufficiently noticed by historians with perhaps the exception of Anderson.³ It is true that Henry had authorized the persecution of 1530, but he had been strongly advised to do so by the Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, and the cruelties which ensued were not commenced by him, nor had he personally sanctioned the last sentence of the law. Bilney, Bayfield, Tewkesbury and Bennet had been put to death under the Statue of Henry IV which virtually gave the bishops the authority to burn a heretic. The Lord Chancellor, More, added his sanction to the burnings and Henry did not interpose. But in 1533 when More

1. Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 695.

2. Ibid., VIII, 696.

3. Anderson, Annals of the English Bible, I, 369.

was living in retirement and the new Chancellor Audley was unwilling to enforce the Bishop's will, Henry personally ordered Frith's examination which led to his death. That Henry was guilty of personal implication is too well known from the sequel in 1538 when he personally tried Lambert for his sacramental opinions.¹

THE EXAMINATION AT CROYDON

Henry lost no time in bringing Frith to trial. Cranmer was ordered to examine Frith and, according to Foxe, "...that there should be no concourse of citizens at the said examination, my lord of Canterbury removed to Croydon, unto whom resorted the rest of the commissioners."² In the meantime Cranmer sent two of his servants, a gentleman, and one of his porters, whose name was Perlebeane, to escort Frith from the Tower to Croydon. When they arrived at the home of Fitzwilliam, constable of the Tower, they presented the letters from Cranmer and the King's ring. The constable gave his permission to take Frith and the three embarked in a boat on the Thames and rowed towards Lambeth Palace.

While they rowed, the three men conversed freely about Frith's impending fate. The gentleman suggested that he bide his time for the sake of his wife and children and also for the truth's sake. For the time, they reasoned, was not yet ripe for his sacramental views. The

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 230ff.

2. Ibid., VIII, 696.

gentleman suggested that some years later, he would have better opportunity to present them. He continued:

This I am sure of that my lord Cromwell, and my lord of Canterbury, much favouring you, and knowing you to be an eloquent learned young man, and now towards the felicity of your life [*i.e.* prime of life], young in years, old in knowledge, and of great forwardness and likelihood to be a most profitable member of this realm, will never permit you to sustain any open shame, if you will somewhat be advised by their counsel. On the other side, if you stand stiff to your opinion, it is not possible to save your life: for like as you have good friends, so have you mortal foes and enemies.¹

Frith, however, was too conscientious and boldly replied:

...in no wise I either may or can, for any worldly respect, without danger of damnation, start aside and fly from the true knowledge and doctrine which I have conceived of the supper of the Lord...for if it be my chance to be demanded what I think in that behalf, I must needs say my knowledge and my conscience, as partly I have written therein already, though I should presently lose twenty lives, if I had so many.²

The conversation continued until they arrived at Lambeth Palace. After a short rest and a meal, the three set out on foot towards Croydon. Not willing that Frith should be brought to trial, the gentleman and porter devised a means of escape. The plan was that when they came near Brixton, Frith was to leave the road, and through the woods make his way to Kent. They in turn would leave the road on the right-hand side towards Wandsworth and report Frith's escape in that direction. But when Frith was told of this plan, he would hear nothing of it.

1. Foxe, *op. cit.*, VIII, 696.

2. *Ibid.*, VIII, 697.

...if you should both leave me here, [replied Frith] and go to Croydon, declaring to the bishops, that you had lost Frith, I would surely follow after as fast as I might, and bring them news that I had found and brought Frith again.¹

No amount of pleading could prevail upon Frith, for his mind was set on meeting his examiners.

After spending the night in the Porter's lodge at Croydon, Frith was examined the next day by some of the bishops in company with Cranmer. He ably defended his position of the Lord's Supper, quoting passages from Augustine and other Patristic authorities. Although the bishops were impressed with Frith's defense, they were not willing to free him.

In the course of the examination, Frith was privately interviewed several times by Cranmer. This information is contained in a letter written by Cranmer to Archdeacon Hawkins, his successor as ambassador at the Emperor's court. It is dated 17th June, but it was written after the twentieth of June.² After describing the coronation of Anne Boleyn on June 1st, Cranmer continues:

Other news have we none notable, but that one Fryth, which was in the Tower in prison, was appointed by the King's Grace to be examined before my Lord of London, my Lord of Winchester, my Lord of Suffolk, my Lord Chancellor, and my Lord of Wiltshire - whose opinion was so notably erroneous, that we could not dispatch him, but was fain to leave him to the determination of his ordinary, which is [Stokesley] the Bishop of London. His said opinion is of such nature that he

1. Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 698.

2. Cranmer refers to Frith's final examination before Stokesley which we know was on the 20th of June.

thought it not necessary to be believed as an article of our faith, that there is the very corporal presence of Christ within the host and sacrament of the altar, and holdeth of this point most after the opinion of Oecolampadius. And surely I myself sent for him three or four times to persuade him to leave that his imagination, but for all that we could do therein, he would not apply to any counsel.¹

One wonders why Cranmer refers to "one Frith" as if he never had heard of him before. "One Frith", - the Eton and Cambridge scholar; the canon selected for Wolsey's College when Cranmer declined; the man known by Wolsey, whom even the King and Cromwell, and foreign agents had been so eager to lure back to England; the same one with whom the late Lord Chancellor, More, had crossed swords; and the one who withstood the bishops in a bold defense of his views. But so it was with Cranmer. Perhaps the newly made Archbishop, who just recently had placed the crown on Anne Boleyn, thought his peculiar reference to Frith in keeping with the dignity of his office as Archbishop.

FINAL EXAMINATION AT ST. PAUL'S

Frith's life was rapidly drawing to a close. On Friday the 20th of June he appeared in St. Paul's before Stokesley, Bishop of London, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester and Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, not so much to defend his position as to hear the sentence of condemnation. After listening to the bishops' review of his doctrines of the Lord's Supper and purgatory, Frith was asked if he would still subscribe to them. In reply

¹. Jenkyns, The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, I, 31,32.

he picked up the pen and deliberately wrote on the prepared document, "I, Frith, thus do think; and as I think, so have I said, written, taught, and affirmed, and in my books have published."¹ The bishops, perceiving that nothing could move Frith to recant, excommunicated him and delivered him to Stephan Peacock, mayor of London, and the sheriffs of London.

Before leaving the examination at St. Paul's, Frith was visited several times by Stephen Gardiner and his nephew, Germain. So it seems from a letter written by Germain Gardiner to Edward Foxe in 1534. Gairdner in his most unsympathetic account of Frith in his Lollardy and the Reformation makes full use of this letter to demonstrate his conclusion that Frith was confounded in argument by Stephen and Germain Gardiner. Although Germain's account bears the stamp of an eyewitness, it is, nevertheless, so out of keeping with what one finds in Frith's published works, that one suspects much of what Germain writes originated in his pregnant boyish mind. And although Gairdner alleges little difference between Germain's account of the examination and Frith's own account, yet to the impartial reader there is much difference. One un-accountable discrepancy is that Frith was condemned because of his views on purgatory as well as Lord's Supper, the former of which Germain omits. The outline of Germain's letter is undoubtedly 1. Foxe, op. cit., V, appendix 22 (Pratt's ed.)

true, i.e. that Gardiner and others tried their best to reclaim Frith to the Catholic faith, but the arguments and Frith's answers to them are highly suspect.

IMPRISONMENT AT NEWGATE

After his condemnation Frith was handed over to the secular authorities, who conveyed him to Newgate prison. Foxe says that:

...he was committed to Newgate, where he was put into the dungeon under the said gate, and laden with bolts and irons as many as he could bear, and his neck with a collar of iron made fast to a post, so that he could neither stand upright nor stoop down, yet was he there continually occupied in writing of divers things, namely, with a candle both day and night, for there came none other light into that place: and in this case he remained three or four days....¹

At Newgate Frith wrote his last letter to the "brethren" and informed them of the charges on which he was examined. He set forth clearly the answers which he gave to certain arguments raised by the traditionalists and concluded with the observation that the only reason for his condemnation was that he held transubstantiation as no article of faith. Rather he thought it should be an indifferent doctrine to be held by each person according to his own conviction. Although the traditionalists argued vehemently against his positive views of the Supper, they judiciously refrained from any prolonged arguments on whether transubstantiation should be an article of faith or not.

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 79 in preface copied from Foxe.

MARTYRDOM

Frith was not alone in his judgment. A tailor, Andrew Hewet, who was betrayed by Holt, the same tailor who betrayed Frith, was examined before the bishops at St. Pauls, presumably on the same day as Frith. He was a "known man" as appears in the Longland register. When questioned concerning the Sacrament, he did not defend his views, but replied that he believed even as Frith did. Thereupon he was condemned to die along with Frith.

On July 3, 1533, the Bishop of London wrote the following to the King:

...Whereas we, in a certain business of inquisition of heresy against certain men, John Frith and Andrew Hewet, heretics, have judged and condemned either of them, as obstinate, impenitent, and incorrigible heretics, by our sentence definitive, and have delivered the said John and Andrew unto the honourable man, sir Stephen Peacock, mayor of your city of London, and John Martin, one of your sheriffs of the same city;...and therefore all and singular the premises so by us done, we notify and signify unto your highness, by these presents sealed with our seal.¹

Though Maynard-Smith could find no purpose for such a letter, it is evident that Henry personally ordered Stokesley to inform him of the outcome of Frith's trial. It was now up to the King to pardon Frith if he so desired. The King, however, added his silent consent to his previous order and Frith was sent to Smithfield the next day.

On Friday, July 4, 1533, Frith and Hewet faced the stake together. As the last preparations were being

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, p. 16.

made, Doctor Cook, the new rector of Honey Lane, openly admonished the people not to pray for Frith and Hewet any more than they would for a dog. Frith, however, desired the Lord to forgive Doctor Cook.

And when he was tied unto the stake, there it sufficiently appeared with what constancy and courage he suffered death; for when the faggots and fire were put unto him, he willingly embraced the same; thereby declaring with what uprightness of mind he suffered his death for Christ's sake, and the true doctrine, whereof that day he gave, with his blood, a perfect and firm testimony. The wind made his death somewhat the longer, which bare away the flame from him unto his fellow that was tied to his back; but he had established his mind with such patience, God giving him strength, that even as though he had felt no pain in that long torment, he seemed rather to rejoice for his fellow, than to be careful for himself.¹

So ended the life of John Frith, the Melanthon of the English Reformation. How tragic that a man so young and with such ability was cast away before his desired mission was completed. And yet perhaps a greater mission was accomplished. His untimely death met a need in the progress of Reformation ideas, and gave impetus to a greater surge of Protestant thinking.

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, 15.

PART II

THE THOUGHT OF JOHN FRITH

CHAPTER VI

PURGATORY

A disputaci

on of Purgatorie made by

John Feith whiche is deuised
in to the booke.

The first booke is an answer vnto Ma-
stell/whiche goeth houte to proue purgato-
rye by naturall philosophy.

The seconde booke answereth vnto Sir
Thomas More/whiche laboureth to
proue purgatorie by scripture.

The thyrde booke maketh an-
swere vnto my lord of Ro-
chester whiche moost lea-
neth vnto the doct-
rines.



Be ware lest any man come and spoyle
you thowm philosophy and deceyfull
banter/thowm the traditions of
men/and ordinations after
the worlde/ and not
after Christ.
Collos. ii.

CHAPTER VI

PURGATORY

PROMINENCE OF THE DOCTRINE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

It is difficult for the modern religious mind to understand the deep eschatological interest of medieval thought. For, if any one thought was predominant in the medieval mind, it was the thought of death. In great earnestness men pondered the nature of the hereafter. They were dominated by the conception of purgatory which was feared with somewhat the same intensity as the nuclear threat of today. The concept of purgatory became the axis around which the whole religious life revolved. Accordingly, the Lord's Supper was viewed primarily in connection with the souls in purgatory, and all other uses of it became secondary. The bequests for masses and even chantries in most instances were viewed as a kind of spiritual insurance against the impending torments of purgatory. The alms which were given and the "good works" of all kinds were for the same purpose. To the Reformers it seemed as though religion in this setting was nothing more than an attempt to avoid the terrible clutches of purgatory, and more than incidentally, a means of fattening the purses of the clergy and monastic orders. "Purgatory pick-purse" was a common slogan during the Reformation.¹

1. Latimer, Sermons, P.S. II, 50.

Therefore, the Medieval Church developed the practice of comforting men about hell by means of the sacrament of penance, but on the other hand, it terrified them by means of an impending purgatory. The Church did not really believe in hell, for the reality of sin had not been disclosed to it, nor did its members want to live a life fully consecrated to God. Hell was shut by means of the sacrament of penance, but purgatory was opened because man knew that somehow the sins committed on earth would need to be expiated in the future.¹

Against this doctrine and its abuses the Reformers aimed their bitterest attacks. Their arguments against the Mass occasioned bitter invectives from the association of the Mass with purgatory. Rightly did the Reformers desire to blast the foundation of purgatory from beneath the superstructure of the Medieval Church, for indulgences and pardons would not have existed apart from purgatory.²

MEDIEVAL DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY

Partly due to this intense preoccupation with death, and to the development of post-Apostolic ideas, the medieval doctrine of purgatory arose. If one source can be disclosed as the origin of the medieval doctrine, it is to be found in the writings of Augustine. He was the first to suggest the conception of a purgatory

1. Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 261.

2. Browne, Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles, p. 502.

previous to the Judgment Day.

Augustine was the first to distinguish clearly... between purgatory and hell - hell retributive and purgatory corrective; hell never ending and purgatory ending with the Judgment Day; hell for the unchristian world and for great sinners among Christians, purgatory for Christians who in spite of weaknesses have been true at bottom to their faith.¹

Upon the foundation laid by Augustine successive thinkers built the doctrine of purgatory. Gregory the Great at the close of the 6th century in his Dialogues asserts distinctly but with a hesitation unknown to modern Roman Popes, that "...a purgatorial fire before the judgment for certain light faults is to be believed."² These light faults, Gregory adds, are such as "continual trifling talk, immoderate laughter, or sinful anxiety in home-life... or errors of ignorance in matters of no great moment; all of which weigh upon the soul even after death, if not forgiven during this life." In like manner Gregory interprets the "hay, wood and stubble" in I Cor. 3 as "very slight and inconsiderable sins, which the fire can easily consume." He adds the caution "...that no man will obtain there any purgation of even slight sins, unless in this life he has deserved to obtain it by good actions".³

With Gregory there first appeared a new source to establish the doctrine of purgatory. This was the evidence for purgatory derived from apparitions and

1. Mason, Purgatory, pp. 38-39.

2. Gregory, Cognomento Magni Opera Omnia, II, 441.

3. Ibid., II, 443.

revelations of the dead. Because of this, one writer maintains that the medieval doctrine of purgatory was constructed "...in part out of the speculations of Austin, but more out of the blood-curdling tales of Gregory; which in turn prepared the way for ampler visions of the punishments of the unseen world."¹ Even Thomas Aquinas to a great extent, based his teaching on the occurrences quoted by Gregory the Great, and also, as he says, upon "...revelations made to many."² It comes as a surprise that the enlightened Sir Thomas More used apparitions to prove the doctrine of purgatory.

Peter Lombard was the next to take up the question of purgatory. When he discussed purgatory in the Sentences, he quoted no other authorities beside Augustine and Gregory. Although earlier thinkers approached the subject from the point of view of eschatology, Lombard was the first to discuss it under the heading of penance; and subsequently all the schoolmen treated the subject in like manner. Lombard perceived the weakness of Gregory's argument by which Gregory defined venial sins as "hay, wood and stubble". For if this is true, then those who build "gold, silver and precious stones" also build "hay, wood and stubble" since all men commit venial sins. Similarly, those who build "hay, wood and stubble" build also "gold, silver and precious stones". These latter

1. Mason, op. cit., p. 43.

2. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, as quoted by Mason, op. cit., p. 43.

materials refer respectively to the contemplation of God, the love of one's neighbor, and good works; without which one can hardly be numbered among the saved of God. If we ask, where then can the line be drawn between those who go to purgatory and those who bypass it, Lombard answers ~~tha~~ that the two classes differ in the main motive of their life, not so much in the individual actions which they perform. For example, the men who devote themselves entirely to pleasing God and abstaining from the world, may be guilty of venial sins, but the fire of charity which is found in them at once consumes those sins, like a drop of water in the furnace. Consequently, there is nothing to be burned when they depart this life. The others, however, carry with them after death their attachment to worldly, though innocent things, along with their desires to please God; and so their venial sins must be consumed by the penal fires of purgatory.¹

Lombard raises a second objection to the teaching of Gregory. Gregory thought that only the punishment of venial sins remains to be remitted after death because if a man is to be saved, he must die penitent, and therefore forgiven of all his sins, venial or otherwise. What remains to be remitted after death would be the punishment for sins and that presumably very small. Lombard replies that penitence does not do away with venial sins; penitence only applies when men turn from their

1. Migne, Patrologiae Petri Lombardi Sententiarum, Vol 192, pp. 895-896.

sins and forsake them. Now since men do not forsake all of their sins, venial sins remain to be remitted in purgatory.¹

Thomas Aquinas took these ideas and those of earlier writers and developed them further. Beginning with the text from Maccabees (II Mac. 12:46) he reasoned that if prayers are to be offered for the forgiveness of the departed, there must be a cleansing from sin after death. In the act of contrition the guilt of sin is eradicated, but the liability of punishment remains. And if God forgives mortal sins, it does not follow that venial sins are forgiven. If venial sins are to be forgiven, it must be accomplished by balancing God's justice by punishment. Therefore, a man dying before making due satisfaction must be punished after death. Those who deny purgatory, he said, speak against the justice of God.²

Several subsidiary questions are treated by Aquinas which had not engaged the attention of his predecessors. With regard to the location of purgatory, Aquinas admits that Scripture is not clear on the subject, but he imagines a two-fold nature of purgatory. One place would be "situated below and in proximity to hell, so that it is the same fire which torments the damned in hell and cleanses the just in purgatory; although the damned being lower in merit are to be consigned to a

1. Migne, op. cit., Vol 192, pp. 895-896.

2. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Pt. II Suppl. II q.1. pp. 236-237.

lower place."¹ The second place of purgatory for special reasons may be in "...various places, either that the living may learn, or that the dead may be succoured, seeing that their punishment being made known to the living may be mitigated through the prayers of the Church."²

One other subsidiary question which had so great effect on Dante and others was Aquinas' teaching on the nature of the purgatorial punishment. First, there is the negative poena damni, the withholding of the beatific vision, for which the soul desires to see God with a fearful intensity, conscious that only bodily hindrances prevent him from seeing God, and that because of his own fault. Secondly, there is the positive poena sensus, the punishment by corporal fire of the soul which because it is the source of sensitivity to the body, is itself immeasurably more sensible than the body, and therefore capable of experiencing greater pain than in natural life. In both of these cases Aquinas agrees with Augustine that "the least pain of Purgatory surpasses the greatest pain of this life."³ The pain of purgatory in one sense is said to be voluntary as a means to an end, "for did they not know that they will be set free, they would not ask for prayers, as they often do."⁴ Divine justice alone

1. Aquinas, op. cit., p. 239.

2. Ibid., p. 239.

3. Ibid., p. 225.

4. Ibid., p. 227.

inflicts the punishment, but it may be that angels take souls to the place of punishment and that "...even the demons, who rejoice in the punishment of man, accompany them and stand by while they are being cleansed, both that they may be sated with their pains, and that when these leave their bodies, they may find something of their own in them."¹

The Schoolmen went far beyond the opinions of Augustine and Gregory the Great. One new and powerful aspect which altered the entire conception of purgatory was introduced by them. This was the element of punishment as satisfaction for sin. Aquinas says in one place "...justice demands that sin be set in order by due punishment."² If satisfaction for sin is not made in this life by good works, suffering and self-denial submitted to voluntarily, it must be made after death. Therefore purgatory is the extension under more painful conditions of the penance which would be enjoined upon the sinner in sacramental confession. Purgatory has now assumed two aspects; (1) the historical theoretical aspect which Augustine and Gregory taught - the cleansing of small faults and sins, (2) the practical aspect which considers the punishment a retribution, each sin committed in life

1. Aquinas, op. cit., p. 228.

2. Aquinas seems to contradict this in another passage, "Guilt is not remitted by punishment, but venial sin as to its guilt is remitted in purgatory by virtue of grace, not only as existing in the habit, but also as proceeding to the act of charity in detestation of venial sin." Ibid., p. 232f.

to be paid for by a due amount of punishment.¹

Since the doctrine of purgatory was intrenched in the thinking of the Medieval Church, the Schoolmen set about to explain how the Church can help one in purgatory. (It was) Alexander of Hales (who) first developed the doctrine of the treasury of merits. He sets out by postulating three kinds of merits -

...those of the penitent, those of Christ, who makes over his passion to us, and those of the Church as a whole. From these there is a triple remission of punishment - the eternal penalty is changed to temporal in the remission of the culpa; the temporal, which is beyond our strength, to a temporal which we can endure, by the absolution of the priest; thirdly, this is reduced to a still smaller infliction by the indulgence, in which the merits of the Church satisfy for us.²

The Church through the power of the keys and by virtue of the fact that it is the mystical body of Christ, has the power to grant indulgences from the supererogatory merits of the members of Christ and chiefly from those of Christ Himself, which are the spiritual treasure of the Church.

Alexander, therefore, virtually placed purgatory under the control of the Pope. In 1343 Alexander's doctrine of the treasury received papal confirmation when Clement VI issued the bull Unigenitus. Clement based his power on the treasure of the merits of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, which were confided for distribution to the successors of the Apostle Peter.³ Thus the doctrine of

1. Mason, op. cit., p. 52.

2. Lea, History of Confession and Indulgences, p. 22 (III).

3. Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum, pp. 233, 234.

the treasury became the official teaching of the Church and the basis for remitting part if not all of the punishment of purgatory.

DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY DURING THE TUDOR PERIOD

However brief this background may be, it is sufficient for the understanding of the doctrine of purgatory which Frith strenuously attacked. Perhaps the most influential teachers of the medieval doctrine were Bishop Fisher of Rochester and Sir Thomas More, one-time chancellor of England. It is thought advantageous to quote from these two men respectively because the first represented the accepted ecclesiastical opinion while the latter represented the popular acceptance of purgatory.

From a popular series of sermons preached by Fisher, a book was printed called A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms (1509). In the course of exposition Fisher interjects the traditional teaching on purgatory. Of prominence is the teaching that punishment in purgatory is retributive in nature. In one breath he refers to the corrective nature of purgatory, and in another he discourses eloquently on the retribution of purgatory. Illustrative of both aspects of purgatorial teaching, Fisher writes:

It is without doubt that God accepteth the prayers, sacrifices, and other good works offered to Him for the souls in Purgatory, whereby they may be the sooner delivered from pain. Of a truth in that place is so great acerbity of pains that no difference is between the pains of Hell and them, but only eternity: the pains of Hell be eternal, and the pains of Purgatory have an end; therefore almighty God punishes sinners very sharply in these pains although they have an end.

And because of that our prophet prayeth saying: "Correct me not good Lord in the pains of purgatory."¹

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[David] was brought forth into this world by His creation, to the intent he should know God, and, that knowledge had, should love Him, and in that love he should always bear God in remembrance and never cease in giving thanks to Him for His innumerable benefits. But these things cannot be done in Purgatory, and much less in Hell; for in Purgatory is so great sorrow for the innumerable pains, that the souls there may scant have remembrance of anything else save only those pains. Since it is so that the sorrows of this world more vehemently occupieth the mind than doth the pleasures, and also the pleasures of this world (if they be great and over many) will not suffer the soul to remember itself; much less therefore it shall have any remembrance abiding in torments. For because also the pains of purgatory be much more than the pains of this world, who may remember God as he ought to do, being in that painful place? Therefore the prophet saith: "No creature being in Purgatory may have Thee in remembrance as he should." Then sith it is so that in purgatory we cannot laud and praise God, how shall we do if we be in Hell?²

It is evident that pain has no intrinsic connection with the purification of the soul, rather it is retributive and while it lasts wholly separates the soul from God. It was in reaction to this that Tyndale wrote to More:

For to punish a man that has forsaken sin of his own accord, is not to purge him, but to satisfy the lust of a tyrant: neither ought it to be called purgatory, but a jail of tormenting, and a satisfactory.³

Sir Thomas More, gifted with literary talents, clothed the essential medieval ideas into forceful prose. In his reply to Simon Fish's Supplication for Beggars, in which is contained an attack on purgatory, More writes:

For whoso pittie not us, whom can he pittie? If ye pittie the poore, there is none so poore as we, that haue not a bratte [i.e. a scrap or a rag] to put on our backes. If ye pittie the blind there is none so blinde as we, which are here in the darke, sauing for

1. Fisher, Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms pp. 9-10.

2. Ibid., p. 13.

3. Tyndale, Works P.S., III, 143.

sightes unpleasaunt and lothsome til some cumfort come. If ye pittie the lame, ther is none so lame as we, that neither can creepe one fote out of the fyre, nor haue one hand at libertie to defende our face from the flame. Finally, if ye pittie anye man in payne, neuer knew ye payn comparable to ours: whose fyre as farre passeth in heate, all the fyres that euer burned upon earth, as the hottest of al those passeth a feyned fyre paynted on a walle. If euer ye laye sicke, and thought the nyghte long, and longed sore for daye, while euery howre semed longer than fyue: bethynke you then what a long night we selye soules endure, that lye slepelesse, restlesse, burning and broyling in the darke fyre one long night of many dayes, of many weks, and some of manye yeres together. You walter peraduenture and toltor in sicknes fro side to side, and find little rest in anye parte of the bedde: we lye bounden to the brandes, and can not lyfte uppe oure headdes. You haue youre physicions with you, that sometyme cure and heale you: no physick wil help our pain, nor no playster coole our heate. Youre keepers dooe you great ease, and put you in good comfort: our keepers are such as God kepe you from, cruell damned spirites, odious, enuious and hateful, despiteous enemies, and despiteful tormentours: and theyr cumpanye more horrible and grieuous to us, then is the payn itselfe, and the intollerable tourmente that they dooe us, wherewith from top to toe, they cease not continuallye to teare us.¹

This was intolerable to Frith who, after reading the works of Fisher, More, and an inferior one by ^{John} ~~William~~ Rastell, decided to confute all three together. In so doing he formulated the best attack on the Church's doctrine of purgatory in England during the Reformation.

ATTACKS PREVIOUS TO FRITH'S WRITING

It is sometimes said that Wycliffe had dealt a death blow to the doctrine of purgatory in England. It is true that he and Huss vigorously attacked the theory of indulgences, but Wycliffe at least held to some form of the doctrine of purgatory until a few years before his

1. More, Works, pp. 337, 338.

death. Speaking of the Church as the "Spouse" of Christ, he depicts the Church as being in three places:

The first part is in blis, with Crist heed of the Chirche, and conteneth angels and blessid men that now ben in hevene. The secounde part of this Chirche ben seintis in purgatorie; and thes synnen not of the newe, but purgen ther olde synnes, and many errours fallen in preiying for thes seintis; and sith thei alle been deed in bodi, Cristis wordis may be taken of him, sue we Crist, in oure lif, and late the dede birie the dede. The thridde part of the Chirche ben trewe men that here lyven... The first part is clepid [called] overcomynge; the myddil is clepid slepyng; the thridde is clepid figtinge chirche; and alle thes maken o Chirche.¹

Harnack is probably right when he points out that Wycliffe contented himself in attacking the abuses, such as indulgences, but he did little to "...frame a satisfactory theory as to how a distressed conscience can be comforted" in light of the impending pains of purgatory.²

During the time of the Reformation Zwingli was the first to reject the medieval view of purgatory. In his Sixty-seven Articles of 1523 Zwingli wrote, "The Holy Scripture knows nothing of a purgatory after this life."³ In August 1524 Zwingli replied to Emser and stated that "all passages of Holy Scripture used in its [purgatory] defense have been violently twisted to serve that purpose."⁴ And in 1525 Zwingli reproduced his section on purgatory contained in the "Reply to Emser" in his work, On True

1. Arnold, (ed.) Select English Works of John Wyclif, III, 339.
2. Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 267.
3. Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, III, 206.
4. Heller (ed.), The Latin Works of H. Zwingli III, 396.

and False Religion. He further elaborates his ideas by answering his opponents from Scripture.¹

It is difficult to determine when Luther broke with the medieval doctrine of purgatory. At the beginning of his troubles with Rome he held on to the doctrine as such although he violently attacked indulgences. However, by 1530 he no longer held the doctrine in any form and set out to refute it in his "Widderuff vom Fegefeuer".²

In 1528 Tyndale opposed the doctrine of purgatory. In the Obedience of a Christian Man he remarked:

Wherefore serveth purgatory, but to purge thy purse, and to poll thee, and rob both thee and thy heirs of house and lands, and of all thou hast, that they may be in honour?"³

Other passages frequently appeared, but they did little towards demonstrating the untenability of purgatory.

Simon Fish wrote his celebrated Supplication for Beggars in which he attacked purgatory because as he felt, it was the source of social evils. Only in an incidental way did he treat it as a religious fallacy. However, he incited More to defend purgatory, which in turn partially led Frith into the controversy. For the first time there appeared in England a well reasoned Scriptural attack on the doctrine of purgatory. In fact, aside from his work on the Lord's Supper, this was the best piece of literature that came from the pen of John Frith.

1. Heller(ed.), op. cit., III, 289.

2. Luther, Works W.E., XXX, 2, pp. 360-390.

3. Tyndale, Works P.S., p. 318.

REFUTATION OF SUPPOSED SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT

In the Supplication of Souls Sir Thomas More cites several biblical passages in support of the doctrine of purgatory. Frith examines each of these passages, together with a few found in the writings of Bishop Fisher of Rochester, and he answers each in detail. It would be tedious for us this side of the Reformation to follow Frith into the intricacies of all the arguments, but we may note the essential arguments, some of which may be regarded as peculiarly up-to-date. It is noteworthy that Catholics normally choose not to defend purgatory from the starting point of Scriptures. But nevertheless, they do claim Scriptural support. Bellarmine's De Purgatorio is regarded in many Catholic circles as the standard work on purgatory, and yet his work cites few Scriptures not previously quoted by More and Fisher.

The proofs from the Old Testament Scriptures may be passed over~~lightly~~ since the doctrine of purgatory finds little if any support in them. The first passage was II Kings 20:3 (and Isaiah 38) where, according to More, Hezekiah "wept at the warnyng of hys death geven hym by the prophete, but onely for the feare of purgatory."¹ Frith, thinking More serious in this exposition, concluded that if Hezekiah feared purgatory, then Christ feared purgatory when He wept bitterly prior to His crucifixion. But no

1. More, op. cit., p. 316.

one supposes that Christ feared purgatory.¹ In this same category is the reference, I Samuel 2:6, where Hannah's words, "The Lord kills and he brings to life: he brings down to Sheol and raises up," meant, according to More, that since God can not deliver from "Sheol" or "Hell", consequently there must be a purgatory from where He can deliver.² Drawing on his knowledge of Hebrew Frith showed that the correct translation of "Sheol" was not "Hell" but merely a "grave or a pit". This was a simple conclusion for one who not only was acquainted with the Hebrew, but unlike More, used it as well.³

Of less significance were two other passages from the Old Testament. Psalm 66, "We have gone through fire and water, and thou hast brought us into coldness" was advanced by Fisher; and Zechariah 9:11, "Thou hast in the blood of Thy Testament brought out they bounden prisoners out of the pit or lake in which there was no water", was cited by More.⁴ Both texts were interpreted literally, the first that God had sent the soul through the fires of purgatory; and the second that God rescued the souls from purgatory, for if the "pit" referred to "Hell", it would be impossible for God to deliver the soul from thence. It is interesting to note how Frith pitted his opponents against

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

2. More, op. cit., p. 317.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 151.

4. More, op. cit., p. 317.

each other. The following quotation not only illustrates this point, but also provides an opportunity to follow Frith's manner of argument which is characteristic of his style.

I am sure you have not forgotten that M. More allegeth the prophet Zachary in the 9th, and affirmeth that there is no water in purgatory. It were hard to make these two agree, for when men ground them on a lie, then for the most part their tales and probations are contrary, and will not well stand together. Nevertheless, in one point they agree full well, that is, both of them say untruly; for neither nother text serveth any whit for purgatory. And as concerning the place of Zachary, it is sufficiently declared what it meaneth. And now will I also declare you the understanding of this text; and first, that it cannot serve for purgatory. ...read the psalm.... The texts before and after, in the same Psalm, will not suffer that this place should be understood of purgatory. For the text immediately before saith, "thou hast set men upon our heads." But the chiefest defenders of purgatory (and even M. More himself) say that "they are not men, but devils which torment the souls in purgatory", notwithstanding my Lord of Rochester (good man!) affirmeth that they are "angels which torment the souls there"; but never man doted so far as to say that men torment the souls in purgatory; wherefore I may conclude that this text is not meant of purgatory, but that the prophet meant that men ran over the children of Israel, and subdued them, and wrapped them in extreme troubles, which in the Scripture are signified by fire and water.¹

Frith concludes the argument by noting in the Psalm that people offer sacrifice to God, a thing impossible for souls in purgatory.²

Frith's specific answer to the argument quoted above from Zachariah is that the writer merely speaks in figurative language. It is not that God delivers from hell, literally, but figuratively as Frith writes, "Christ

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 194-5.

2. Ibid., pp. 195-6.

delivereth us out of hell, because he saveth and delivereth us that we come not there, which else should surely enter into it for ever."¹

Before considering the alleged New Testament passages in support of purgatory, it may be permissible here to consider the inter-testamental Apocryphal authority of II Maccabees which More quoted, following the practice of the Schoolmen.² Present day proponents of purgatory still make much of this authority. Of the two "Scripture" passages quoted by the author of the article on purgatory in the Catholic Encyclopedia, II Maccabees is urged as the best argument for purgatory.³ In using this argument, More made much of the fact that Reformers, especially Luther, rejected Maccabees from the canon of Scripture. Luther earlier denied the authority of Maccabees, but in 1530 he not only reaffirmed his rejection of Maccabees as Scripture, but attacked the doctrine of purgatory contained therein.⁴ Calvin hesitated to consider the argument from Maccabees lest anyone think he sanctioned the use of the book as part of the canonical Scripture. He argued, however, that Jerome and the early Church did not receive the book as equal to the authority of Old and New Testaments. From internal evidence Calvin argued:

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 154.

2. More, op. cit., pp. 318-319.

3. Hanna, "Purgatory" Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 576.

4. Luther, op. cit. W.E., III, 2, p. 369.

...the author himself did not sufficiently show what degree of deference is to be paid him, when in the end he asks pardon for anything less properly expressed. He who confesses that his writings stand in need of pardon, certainly proclaims that they are not oracles of the Holy Spirit.¹

Frith also denied the authority of Maccabees and quoted Jerome on the status of Maccabees with respect to canonical Scripture.

...Like as the Church doth read the books of Judith, Tobias, and the Maccabees, but receiveth them not among the canonical Scriptures, even so let it read these two books (he meaneth the books of Sapience and Ecclesiasticus,) unto the edifying of the people, and not to confirm the doctrine of the Church thereby.²

Accordingly the book of Maccabees was merely a source-book for Jewish tradition and not suitable for use in erecting Church doctrine. Conclusive of this, although Frith did not see it, was our Lord's condemnation of Jewish tradition.

If, however, Maccabees is taken as authoritative, it still does not prove a doctrine of purgatory. The text itself says nothing of pain or fire, but only sacrifice for the dead so that they may be found worthy of the resurrection. Consequently there is no suffering or purgatory involved. That the sacrifices which Judas proposed for the slain men in battle could not be for the purpose of helping souls in purgatory, is proved by the Schoolmen who taught that before Christ came there was no purgatory, but only the Limbo patrum.³

1. Calvin, Institutes, I, 578.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 156.

3. Ibid., p. 160; Luther, op. cit., W.E. XXX, 2, p. 371.

There were several New Testament texts used as proof-texts for purgatory.¹ From Revelation 5:13, "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein...", More supposed the creatures under the earth were the souls in purgatory.² But this text says nothing of purgatory; Frith demonstrated this by examining the context and comparing the meaning of this passage with Psalm 148 where the psalmist calls all creatures everywhere to praise God.³ The whole idea is tersely presented by Calvin:

...What kinds of creatures do they suppose are here enumerated? It is absolutely certain, that both irrational and inanimate creatures are comprehended. All then, which is affirmed is that every part of the universe, from the highest pinnacle of heaven to the very centre of the earth, each in its own way proclaims the glory of the Creator.⁴

Perhaps equally lacking in support for purgatory was the text, Acts 2:24, "But God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death", which was advanced by More. According to More the Latin infernus may be translated "hell" and thus the verse would read "But God raised Him

1. It is significant to note here that neither Fisher nor More cited the "spirits in prison" passage (I Peter 3:19, 20), as a proof-text for purgatory. And Frith does not mention the text in his reply.
2. More, op. cit., pp. 319-320.
3. Frith, op. cit., pp. 165, 166. R.H. Charles in his monumental commentary on Revelation, admits that those "under the earth" may refer to the inhabitants of Hades which is, however, far different from purgatory. But he concludes in favor of the traditional Protestant interpretation, i.e. "...all created things throughout the entire universe acclaim together...[praises to] God." International Critical Commentary, p. 151.
4. Calvin, op. cit., I, 578.

up, having loosed the pangs of Hell". More argued that since Christ did not loose the pains of Hell, he must have released the pains of purgatory.¹ Frith, however, did not disagree with More's translation of the Latin inferni, but he contended that More was not using the Greek text that Erasmus had prepared.²

For albeit the man would not take the pains to read the Greek, yet if he had but once looked upon the translation of his old friend and companion, Erasmus, it would have taught him to have said, Solutis doloribus mortis; that is dissolving the pains of death, according to the Greek, and very words of Luke, which wrote these Acts in the Greek tongue.³

If More's interpretation, however, is granted, this text still does not support a doctrine of purgatory. If anything, it proves more than the proponents of purgatory would admit, for the text indicates that Christ, in loosing the pains of purgatory, was himself confined in purgatory. Now it is absurd to suggest that Christ went to purgatory.⁴

Fisher thought the parable of Dives and Lazarus in Luke 16 could be urged as proof of purgatory. Needless to say, Frith perceived the fallacy and scored his point against Fisher and his purgatory.

I am sure [Frith writes] my Lord is not so ignorant as

1. More, op. cit., p. 320.

2. It is interesting to note that Knox's translation of the New Testament, which has the official sanction of the Catholic hierarchy renders Acts 2:24 "But God raised him up again, releasing him from the pangs of death."

3. Frith, op. cit., pp. 166, 167.

4. Ibid., p. 167.

to say that a parable proveth any thing. But the right use of a parable is this, to expound a hard text or point that was before touched, and could not enter into every man's capacity.¹

Fisher advanced a more convincing argument from Matthew 16 where the "keys" are mentioned. Assuming that the "keys" are intended for the Pope's use, Fisher asks what good are they if the Pope cannot release souls from purgatory?² The Pope, however, does not have exclusive right to the "keys" as Frith demonstrates.

There is but one key of heaven, which Christ calleth the key of knowledge, and this key is the word of God... This key, or keys...Christ delivered unto Peter, and unto his other apostles alike,...after he was risen from death,...and gave the keys to all indifferently... he opened their wits to understand the Scripture that repentence and forgiveness might be preached,... Therefore, it is the word that bindeth and looseth through the preaching of it. For when thou tellest them their vices and iniquities, condemning them by the law, then bindest thou them by the word of God; and when thou preacheest mercy in Christ unto all that repent, then dost thou loose them by the word of God.³

This text is, nevertheless, irrelevant to the doctrine of purgatory since the binding and loosing refers to an earthly transaction and not to one after death in purgatory. Therefore, if the keys are granted, this text, ^{still} cannot be used to support the Pope's claim for releasing souls from purgatory.⁴

Two texts, I John 5 and Matthew 12, which were advanced by More and Fisher respectively may be considered

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 191.
2. Fisher, Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio (1558) Art. 25 passim.
3. Frith, op. cit., pp. 199-200.
4. Ibid., p. 201.

together since both are based on the argument from silence. The first text is quoted by More: "There is some sin that is unto the death: I bid not that any man should pray for that." More interpreted this verse to mean:

This sin, as the interpreters agre, is understanden of desperacion and impenytence: as though saint John would sai, that who so depart out of this world impenitent or in dispaire, any prayer after made can neuer stand him in stede. Then appereth it clearely that sainte John meaneth that there be other which die not in such case for whom he would men should pray, because that prayer to such soules maye be profitable. ...it appereth plain that such praier helpeth only for purgatorye: whiche they must therefore nedes grant, except thei denye saint John.¹

In answering this argument Frith admits his ^{co} confusion in understanding More's use of the term, "death". If the "sin unto death" was the sin of impenitence unto temporal death, then More would carry the argument. But Frith denies this by equating the sin unto death with the unpardonable sin of Mark 3, "Every blasphemy shall be forgiven, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, but is guilty unto everlasting damnation." This sin is more than impenitence: impenitence is the fruit of this sin. Noteworthy is the fact that John refers to prayers with regard to the living and not for those who have died. There is therefore, no justification for offering prayers for the dead in this text.²

1. More, op. cit., p. 319.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 165.

See also International Critical Commentary, p. 145.

The passage in Matthew 12 has always given occasion for the supporters of purgatory to urge their theory. More advances the argument that since the sin against the Holy Spirit will never be remitted in this world nor in the world to come, it is evident that there are some sins forgiven in purgatory.¹ Zwingli in 1525 had already quoted the corresponding passage in Mark 3:29 where the text reads, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."² After quoting Mark 3 Frith interprets the passage in question as referring to the absolute impossibility of receiving forgiveness after death.³

Of less significance is the argument based on Matthew 12:36,37 where according to More's rendering, "men shall yield a reckoning of every idle word, and that shall be after this present life." In explanation More continues, "Then woteth euery man that by that reckenynge is understonden a punishment therefore, which shal...be...in purgatorye."⁴ This sounds convincing, but only at the expense of suppressing part of the text as Frith is quick to reveal.

1. More, op. cit., pp. 323,324.

2. Zwingli, op. cit., III, 289. It is curious that Augustine fails to notice this cross-reference from Mark when interpreting Matthew 12 in The City of God, II, 453. He interprets the passage as implying forgiveness for some after death.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 172.

4. More, op. cit., p. 324.

...for this text maketh more against him than any that he brought before seemeth to make with him. The words of Matthew are these: I tell you, that of every idle word that men speak, shall they yield a reckoning in the day of judgment; but that leaveth he out full craftily. Now let us reason of this text. By the reckoning is understood a punishment for the sin, (as Master More saith himself,) and this reckoning shall be upon the day of doom; ergo, then this punishment for sin cannot be before the day of doom, but either upon or else after the day of doom; for God will not first punish them, and then after reckon with them to punish them anew. And so is purgatory quite excluded, for all they that ever imagined any purgatory, do put it before the judgment; for when Christ cometh to judgment, then ceaseth purgatory, as they all consent:...¹

The locus classicus of purgatory, however, is the passage in I Corinthians 3:10-15 where Paul describes everyone's work as passing through fire to be tested, whether it be of "gold, silver and precious stones" or of "hay, wood, and stubble". More believed this fire to be the fire of purgatory.² Frith rejected this theory and interpreted this passage figuratively. Characteristically, Frith begins by describing the context of this passage. Paul, he says, laid the foundation by preaching Christ; now he writes to the Corinthians to be careful how they build on that foundation which was Christ, whether "gold, silver" etc. or "hay, wood" etc., for all shall be tested as it were through fire. Frith was certain that "gold" etc. and "hay" etc. were to be understood figuratively as the pure word of God, and the preaching of ceremonies and men's traditions respectively. Each man's preaching activity shall be tested by fire which, according to most early

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

2. More, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

Fathers followed by Frith, means "temptation, tribulation, persecution etc." For the day or light of God's word shall reveal it and subject the preacher's work to the spiritual fire of temptation, persecution and tribulation. If the teaching endures this spiritual fire of temptation and persecution, then he may know that he is building "gold, silver and precious stones" on the foundation of Christ. The fire, therefore, is to be understood figuratively, allowing no basis for purgatory.

If, however, one still rejects the figurative fire, one still must answer the objection that this passage cannot refer to a universal purgatory since only preachers and Christian workers are referred to in this text.¹

The Reformers agree substantially on the figurative interpretation of this passage. Zwingli in 1525 interpreted the text in much the same way that Frith did six years later, by following Augustine and Chrysostom in interpreting the fire figuratively as "persecution or trial" in this life. The unique aspect of Zwingli's interpretation is the meaning given to "gold" etc. and "wood" etc. The first are those people who have received the word of God and are willing to die for it, while the latter are those who believe for the moment and in the time of trial desert Christ.² Calvin interprets the text more comprehensively in his Institutes and he cites Augustine and

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 168-171.

2. Heller, op. cit., III, 289, 290.

Chrysostom in support of a figurative fire i.e., "the tribulation or cross by which the Lord tries his people, that they may not rest satisfied with the defilements of the flesh."¹ But Calvin rejects this interpretation for a more spiritual one, namely, the trial of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in following out the thread of the metaphor, gold, wood etc and adapting its parts properly to each other, he gave the name of fire to the examination of the Holy Spirit. For just as silver and gold, the nearer they are brought to the fire, give stronger proof of their genuineness and purity, so the Lord's truth, the more thoroughly it is submitted to spiritual examination, has its authority the better confirmed. As hay, wood and stubble, when the fire is applied to them, are suddenly consumed, so the inventions of man, not founded on the word of God, cannot stand the trial of the Holy Spirit, but forthwith give way and perish.²

REFUTATION OF SUPPOSED HISTORICAL SUPPORT

Having disposed of Sir Thomas More's arguments from Scripture, Frith proceeds to refute Bishop Fisher's arguments from the early Church Fathers. If More was certain that purgatory was accepted as an article of faith for 1500 years, Frith was equally certain that the Fathers of the first four centuries did not teach a doctrine of purgatory, and proceeded to demonstrate this.

Being acquainted with the writings of the early Church Fathers, Frith was aware that in post-apostolic times there arose:

...infinite heretics by whole sects,...which had so swerved from the truth, and wrested the Scripture out of frame, that it was not possible for one man,

1. Calvin, op. cit., I, 579.

2. Ibid., I, 579.

no, nor for one man's age, to restore it again unto the true sense. Among these there were some which not only feigned a purgatory, but also doted so far, that they affirmed that every man, were he never so vicious, should be saved through that fire, and alleged for them the place of Paul, I Corinthians III.1

Can this assertion that purgatory was only the doctrine of heretics be substantiated from the Fathers, at least to the time of Augustine? A careful examination of the Ante-Nicene writings will substantiate Frith's claim.

Three passages are sometimes presented as referring to purgatory. The first is found in Tertullian's De Anima, which was written after he became a Montanist. With reference to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Tertullian speaks of punishments and rewards in Hades.² From the text, "thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing," Tertullian understands that "...the smallest even of your delinquences [must] be paid off in the period before the resurrection", meaning perhaps that he looked on the punishments as in some sense purgatorial in the intermediate state. Previously, however, before Tertullian united with the Montanists, he spoke of Paradise as "the place of heavenly bliss, appointed to receive the spirits of the saints."³ Tertullian, therefore, held the usual view before becoming a Montanist, but after his break with the orthodox Church, he entertains this opinion which he admits he derived

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 185.

2. Roberts and Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Library, II, 538-539.

3. Ibid., II, 33.

from the teaching of the "Paraclete", i.e. Montanus.¹ Conclusive, however, is the fact that according to Tertul-
lian, there is no punishment or purification before the
resurrection.²

The second passage urged in support of purgatory is found in the Acts of the Martyr Perpetua. Perpetua in a vision sees her brother, Dinocrates, who died earlier, in a dark place, hot and thirsty, dirty and pale, trying to drink from an object which was above his head. After praying much for him, she sees him in a subsequent vision cleansed, well fed and playing happily like a child. "Then", she adds, "I understood that he was released from punishment."³ This passage, however, does not support the doctrine of purgatory since Dinocrates died unbaptized. If, moreover, this fact is passed over lightly, one must admit that visions are precarious grounds on which to build a doctrine of purgatory.⁴

The third passage commonly urged in support of purgatory is found in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria.⁵ Speaking of Hades, Clement says, "God's punishments are saving and disciplinary leading to conversion." This is not the place for a full discussion of Clement's

1. Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., II, 541.

2. Ibid., II, 539.

3. Quoted from Gibson, The Thirty-Nine Articles, p. 544.

4/ Mason, op. cit., p. 23.

5. Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., II, 330.

thought on the intermediate state, but we may conclude with Mason that all divine chastisement for Clement was remedial and may take all eternity for men to rise from mansion to mansion. At any rate it is certain that Clement borrowed this from the heathen philosophies and religions, into which he sought to read a Christian meaning. His own speculations and reasonings seem to form the basis for this doctrine and not apostolic tradition or Scripture.¹

There are other passages in the early Fathers which some interpret in favor of the doctrine of purgatory. Origen, Ambrose, Lactanius, Hilary and Jerome speak of a cleansing fire, not in the intermediate state, but after Judgment, and not merely for some people, but for all including the greatest saints, even the Virgin Mary.²

The first appearance of purgatory as an intermediate state of purgation may be traced to the writings of Augustine. Writing in the Enchiridion (c. 420 A.D.) Augustine interprets the fire of I Corinthians 3:11-15 as a "trial of adversity"³, in opposition to those who believed this fire to be a cleansing agent after death. But after rejecting the purgatorial fire, Augustine wavers and accommodates himself to his objectors by saying:

It is a matter that may be inquired into, and either ascertained or left doubtful, whether some believers shall pass through a kind of purgatorial fire, and in

1. Mason, op. cit., pp. 3-10.

2. Ibid., passim.

3. Augustine, Enchiridion p. 95.

proportion as they have loved with more or less devotion the goods that perish, be less or more quickly delivered from it.¹

In the City of God, Augustine's last literary accomplishment, he strikes out again against the universalists who taught that all people will eventually be purified and saved through the cleansing fire of the Judgment. Instead of denying altogether a purifying fire after this life, Augustine compromises by allowing a purifying fire before the Judgment and that only for Christians. Concluding his exposition of I Corinthians 3:11-15, Augustine remarks:

But if it be said that in the interval of time between the death of this body and that last day of judgment and retribution which shall follow the resurrection, the bodies of the dead shall be exposed to a fire of such a nature that it shall not affect those who have not in this life indulged in such pleasures and pursuits as shall be consumed like wood, hay, stubble, but shall affect those others who have carried with them structures of that kind; if it be said that such worldliness, being venial, shall be consumed in the fire of tribulation either here only, or here and hereafter both, or here that it may not be hereafter, - this I do not contradict, because possibly it is true.²

Thus we see that Augustine suggested that if the universalists were wrong yet they may believe that believers may be subjected to the purgatorial discipline here on earth and some after death, or both now and then before the Judgment.

In harmony with this Frith says:

And even so St. Austin went wisely to work, first

1. Augustine, Enchiridion, pp. 96-97.
2. Augustine, The City of God, II, 463.

condemning by the Scripture that error [i.e. all are to be saved through fire] which was most noisome: and wrote on this manner: Albeit some might be purged through fire, yet not such as the Apostle condemneth, when he saith, that the persons which so do, shall not possess the kingdom of heaven. And where they would have stuck unto Paul's text, (I Cor. 3) and affirm that they should be saved through fire, St. Austin answered, that Paul's text was understood of the spiritual fire, which is temptation, affliction, tribulation, etc., This wrote he in the 67th and 68th of his Enchiridion, to subvert that gross error, that all should be saved through the fire of purgatory. Yet in the 69th, he goeth a little near them, and saith, that it may be doubted whether there be any such purgatory or not. He durst not yet openly condemn it, because he thought that men could not at that time bear it.¹

This was Frith's interpretation of how Augustine first suggested the doctrine of purgatory. Whether we are inclined to agree or not, we must admit several facts. First, Augustine was influenced by the popular thought of salvation through the purgatorial fire of the Judgment. Secondly, Augustine does little more than suggest the doctrine of purgatory. For him it is not an article of faith as the 16th century traditionalists thought.

Calvin and Luther, however, are more emphatic than Frith when it comes to enrolling Augustine on the side against purgatory. Calvin excuses Augustine's prayer for his departed mother as "doubtless an old woman's wish, which her son did not bring to the test of Scripture, but from natural affection wished others to approve."² Luther was more emphatic and stated dogmatically, "Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome held nothing at all of purgatory."³

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 186.

2. Calvin, op. cit., I, 581.

3. Luther, Table-Talk, p. 278.

Is there any evidence from Augustine's teaching of the destiny of the soul after death that may help us determine his thoughts on the matter? Frith thought he had the decisive passage in Augustine's De Vanitate hujus:

Wot ye well, that when the soul is departed from the body, either it is by and by put into paradise, according to his good deserts, or else it is thrust headlong into hell for his sins.¹

If purgatory was an actuality for Augustine, would he have made the above statement without qualifying it with a third possible destination of the soul, namely purgatory?

If, however, Augustine taught a doctrine of purgatory, it was not the same as the medieval teaching. For in the intermediate state the souls are at rest and do not suffer torments as the 16th century traditionalists imagined. This is Augustine's final thought on the matter for he writes in his last literary composition,

And I see that, as I have now spoken of the rise of this city among the angels, it is time to speak of the origin of that part of it which is hereafter to be united to the immortal angels, and which at present is being gathered from among mortal men, and is either sojourning on earth, or, in the persons of those who have passed through death, is resting in the secret receptacles and abodes of disembodied spirits.²

After examining the writings of the early Fathers, Frith turned to another source to bolster his argument against a Patristic doctrine of purgatory. Some years before, Fisher, in writing against Luther, disclosed the following admission:

1. As quoted in Frith, op. cit., p. 186.
2. Augustine, The City of God, I, 493.

There is no man now-a-days that doubteth of purgatory, and yet among the old ancient fathers was there either none, or else very seldom mention made of it. And also among the Grecians, even unto this day, is not purgatory believed. Let him read that will the commentaries of the old Grecians, and as I suppose, he shall find either no words spoken of it, or else, very few.¹

Evidently More was unaware of what Fisher wrote when he raised the argument that purgatory was an article of faith for 1500 years. In this connection it is curious that Frith fails to take More to task more severely for such an extravagant statement. Frith would have been nearer the point if he would have asked More to subtract 1400 years from the 1500 instead of merely 400 years. For even in the 12th century Otho Frisingensis pointed out that not all the adherents of the Church were agreed on the doctrine of purgatory.² It was not until the Council of Florence in 1439 that the doctrine of purgatory became an article of faith, and then only in the Western Church. The Eastern Church rejected it and even in our time refuses to hold the doctrine of purgatory as Rome teaches.

In conclusion Frith raises a pertinent question. "Be it in case that all the doctors did affirm purgatory, as they do not, what were my Lord [Fisher] the nearer his purpose?"³ Could not the doctors be wrong on purgatory as on other things? Fisher admitted in article 37 against Luther:

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1. Fisher, Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio (1525), p. 175.
 2. Farrar, Mercy and Judgment, p. 65.
 3. Frith, op. cit., p. 189.

The Pope hath not so allowed the whole doctrine of St. Thomas, that men should believe every point he wrote were true. Neither hath the church so approved either St. Augustine or St. Jerome, nor any other author's doctrine, but that in some places we may dissent from them, for they in many places have openly declared themselves to be men, and many times to have erred.¹

Frith and Fisher agree basically that the Fathers are not to be used authoritatively without discrimination, especially in matters of doctrine. Where Frith disagrees with Fisher is on the question of what standard is to be used in determining what is right or wrong in the Fathers. After rejecting the Pope as a judge in these matters, Frith adds:

Our judge, therefore, must not be partial, flexible, nor ignorant (and so are all natural men excluded); but he must be unalterable, even searching the bottom and ground of all things. Who must that be? Verily, the Scripture and word of God, which was given by his Son, confirmed and sealed by the Holy Ghost, and testified by miracles and blood of all martyrs. This word is the judge that must examine the matter, the perfect touchstone that trieth all things, and day that discovereth all juggling mists. If the doctors say any thing not dissonant from this word, then it is to be admitted and holden for truth. But if any of their doctrine discord from it, it is to be abhorred, and holden accursed.²

In support of this judgment on the value of patristic works for determining doctrine, Frith quotes Augustine's letter to Jerome, in which Augustine says that men are to read his writings with caution and accept them only in so far as they are consonant with "Scripture or clear reason."³

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1. Fisher, Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio, (1558) Art. 37 p. 405.
 2. Frith, op. cit., pp. 189-190.
 3. Ibid., p. 190.

REFUTATION OF SUPPOSED THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The theological support for the doctrine of purgatory was derived from the medieval solution to the problem of sin. When the believer was baptized, he enjoyed Christ's forgiveness a poena et a culpa, but for each sin after baptism he must do penance to be restored into God's favor. There were three parts to penance, (1) contrition, (2) confession, and (3) satisfaction. The last part especially evoked severe criticism from the Reformers, for by satisfaction the Roman Church taught that the penitent was to do some "good works" such as pilgrimages, fastings and alms, that by these the Lord was to be propitiated and by them pardon was to be earned.¹

Frith understood his opponent's view that God only forgives "the fault and crime, but not...the pain which is due to the crime."² If the pain or punishment for sin is not worked out in this life, it is transferred to purgatory where the soul undergoes punishment until satisfaction for past sins is complete. Frith vigorously objected to this:

...for all men living are not able to satisfy towards God for one sin. Neither are all the pains of hell able to purge one sin, or satisfy for it: for then at the length the damned souls should be delivered out of hell.³

1. Bishop Fisher thus extols the merit of tears. "Then if every desire of sin shall be done away by weeping tears, it may well be called a great shower or a flood" them wherewith the heap of sins shall be washed away." Psalms I, 15.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 102.

3. Ibid., p. 103.

Frith seriously objected to the limitation placed on Christ's atonement by the Romanists. Several times he points out that if Christ did not fully atone for sin, He could not atone for any sin. There is no such thing as a partial atonement for Frith. Objectors to the doctrine of purgatory have always perceived "that the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory as a satisfaction to God for part of the punishment due to sin seriously detracts from the perfection of Calvary, and from the Justification that comes through the acceptance by faith of the Divine atonement."¹

And Frith emphatically states:

If we must make satisfaction unto God for our sins, then would I know why Christ died: think ye that his blood was shed in vain? ...if there were any other way unto the Father than through Christ's blood, whether purgatory, or sacrifices, or what thou canst imagine, then was his death not necessary. But, alas! what unkindness is that, so to deject the precious blood of Christ, and to set his gracious favour at nought? If there be any means by the which I may satisfy for my sins, I need no redeemer, nor yet any favour, but may call for my right and duty. And so were there no need of Christ's blood, mercy, and favour. But what may be more blasphemous unto Christ's blood and his free redemption?²

With regard to the fulness of the atonement,

Frith remarks on a positive note:

Christ, the Son of God, being the brightness of his glory and very image of his substance, bearing up all things with the word of his power, hath in his own person purged our sins, and is set on the right hand of God. Behold the true purgatory and consuming fire, which hath fully burnt up and consumed our sins, and hath for ever pacified the Father's wrath towards us.

1. Griffith Thomas, The Principles of Theology p. 303.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 109.

Mark how he saith, that Christ, in his own person, hath purged our sins. If thou yet seek another purgation, then are you injurious unto the blood of Christ; for if thou thought his blood sufficient, then wouldst thou seek no other purgatory, but give him all the thanks and all the praise of thy whole health and salvation, and rejoice whole in the Lord.¹

Tyndale had been reticent concerning purgatory before Frith's attack, but a few months after Frith wrote, Tyndale wrote his Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John (September, 1531), which may be taken as his contribution against purgatory. He does not cover the same ground that Frith did, but he elaborates the concept of Christ's full atonement for sin. Christ, according to Tyndale, made full satisfaction both a poena et a culpa for all the sins of the world; both past sins and future sins committed through the frailty of the flesh.² Through genuine repentance God forgives the repentant if he clings to Christ his Advocate and eternal Priest.³

Frith, however, demonstrated that the traditionalists also believed in the full satisfaction of Christ's work. For no sooner did they say that the pain was altered into the temporal pain of purgatory, they quickly said that the Pope because of the treasury of merits, was able to pardon the souls in purgatory.⁴ Now the treasury of merits consisted mostly of Christ's passion, as well as the works

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 100.

2. Tyndale, Works P.S. II, 155.

3. Ibid., II, 152-3 and Frith, op. cit., p. 109.

4. Harnack, op. cit., VI, 263.

of supererogation of the saints. Here it was admitted that Christ's passion was sufficient to take away the penalty and guilt of sin, and

If Christ deserved all for us, who giveth the Pope authority to reserve a part of his deservings from me, and to sell me Christ's merits for money?1

In connection with the atonement of Christ, Frith cites Ephesians 5 where Paul speaks of Christ who loved the Church and cleansed it through the Word to make it a pure Church that it may be holy and without blame. If the Church is pure, spotless, and without blame, why must members of the Church be cast into purgatory for additional cleansing? This would be an unrighteous act on the part of Christ to allow His Church to undergo the purgatorial discipline.²

From Ephesians I where Christ is said to have chosen the believers from the beginning of the world that they might be "holy and without spot in his sight", Frith

1. In connection with the Pope's power to dispense with Christ's merits, Frith takes up the argument of Simon Fish who said that if the Pope has power to release from purgatory, he is the greatest tyrant that ever lived if he does not release them immediately. More answered that this charge may be attributed to God who allows men to remain in hell in spite of the fact that He could release them. Frith counters by asserting the true nature of the attributes of God. His goodness, justice, power, wisdom and mercy are not parts of the nature of God, but are God in each and as a whole. Therefore God can not exercise one attribute without conflicting with another. For example, God through His mercy cannot release from hell, unless His justice is satisfied. God, then, cannot manifest His mercy except through Christ. Frith, op. cit., p. 131. The Pope, however, has the full satisfaction in his hands, as he says, to deliver from purgatory. Therefore since the Pope does not release the sufferers, he remains a cruel tyrant. Ibid., p. 178.

2. Ibid., p. 100; Tyndale, Works P.S. I, 423.

reasons that if this is the case it is unnecessary to be detained in purgatory. But this brings up the subject of justification by faith which Ephesians I implies. In answer to the question, how can the sinner be regarded righteous? - Frith says:

...if we consider our rebellious members, which are sold under sin, then are we grievous sinners. And, contrarywise, if we believe that he hath freely given us his Christ, and with him all things, so that we be destitute in no gift, then are we righteous in his sight, and our conscience at peace with God, not through ourselves, but through our Lord Jesus Christ. So mayest thou perceive that thou art righteous in Christ, for through him is not thy sin imputed nor reckoned unto thee. And so are they, to whom God imputeth not their sins, blessed, righteous, without spot, wrinkle or blame, and therefore, will he never thrust them into purgatory.¹

Moreover Frith reasoned that if there will always be a time when some souls necessarily will go through purgatory, what will happen to the people who are still living when Christ returns? Paul in discussing the Second Coming allows for only two states, the home of the blessed, "with the Lord", and the wicked; but none for the so-called potential recipients of purgatory, for all shall be done in the "twinkling of an eye."²

In opposition to the doctrine of purgatory, Frith urged the biblical view of the intermediate state of the soul. After death the soul does not sleep, as Luther once supposed,³ but peace and rest are enjoyed "in the

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 101.

2. Ibid., p. 98.

3. From 1522 to 1530 Luther "inclined strongly to the idea of a deep sleep" until Judgment Day. Grisar, Luther, IV, 505.

hand of God."¹ "Precious is in the sight of the Lord the death of his saints, (Psalm 116) and Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. (Revelation 14)".²

St. Paul saith, I desire to be loosed from this body, and to be with Christ. (Phil. 1)...I suppose that he knew nothing of purgatory, but that he rather thought, (as the truth is,) that death should finish all his evils and sorrows, and give him rest in loosing him from his rebellious members, which were sold and captive under sin.³

If the soul, therefore, after death rests in peace and in the hand of God, Frith could not concede a purgatory where the soul is punished for venial sins.

This positive approach to the state after death counteracts the popular response of fear which is engendered by a belief in purgatory. It was less difficult for Frith to demonstrate the absence of fear with a corresponding reverence to God than it was for his opponents to maintain obedience to God only as a result of a belief in the pains of purgatory. Frith urged the motive of love for God as the basis of obedience and right moral life, while his objectors insisted upon fear as their motive.⁴ This point even today distinguishes Protestants from Catholics in the eyes of the common man.

Further than this Frith refused to comment on the state of the departed before the resurrection. Since his was a biblical theology, he refused to speculate and

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 192.

2. Ibid., p. 139; Luther, op. cit., XXX,2, p. 375f.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 141.

4. Ibid., pp. 119-120.

rebellious members."¹

As a fitting conclusion, Frith adds:

When our members are fully mortified, that is, when death hath subdued our corruptible body, and our flesh comitted to rest in the earth, then cease the purgatories that God hath ordained, and then are we fully purged in his sight.²

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 91.

2. Ibid., p. 91.

CHAPTER VII

THE LORD'S SUPPER

A booke ma-

de by John frith prisoner in the
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John frith was condemp-
ned and after burēt in smith
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the fourth daye of Ju-
li. Anno. r 533.

¶ Mortui resurgent.

CHAPTER VII

THE LORD'S SUPPER

SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

There is no concise definition of Sacraments to be found in the writings of John Frith. Yet it is possible to piece together several fragments which enable us to formulate a working definition. Following Augustine, Frith defines a Sacrament as a sign of a holy thing. Sacraments, therefore, are external signs which God uses to seal His promises to us,¹ and they are means of originating and sustaining faith in the believer.² This definition closely approximates that of Calvin who defined a Sacrament as "...an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards Him, both before Himself, and before angels as well as men."³

Throughout Frith's treatment of the Sacraments, he never forgot the advice of his closest friend, Tyndale, who wrote a letter to him stating, "Sacraments without signification refuse."⁴ The emphasis, therefore, was always placed not on the sign, but on its signification, i.e. the thing signified which was the work of Christ in

1. Frith, Works, pp. 425, 332, 333.

2. Ibid., p. 367.

3. Calvin, Institutes, II, 491-492.

4. Greenslade, The Work of William Tyndale, p. 112.

the believer's soul. To the one who expected to find spiritual benefit in the sign alone, Frith urged the analogy between the alepole and the sign of the Sacrament. The person who desires a drink and begins to suck the alepole, i.e. the advertisement, instead of going into the building where the ale is sold, is stupid, and instead of it quenching his thirst, it makes him dry.

And likewise it is in all sacraments; for if we understand not what they mean, and seek health in the outward sign, then we suck the alepole, and labour in vain. But if we do understand the meaning of them, then shall we seek what they signify, and go to the significations, and there shall we find undoubted health.¹

With respect to the Lord's Supper, Frith explains what the signification is in the following terms:

It signifieth that Christ's body was broken upon the cross to redeem us from the thralldom of the devil, and that his blood was shed for us to wash away our sins. Therefore we must run thither, if we will be eased. For if we think to have our sins forgiven for eating of the sacrament, or for seeing the sacrament once a day, or for praying unto it, then surely we suck the alepole. And by this you may perceive what profit cometh of those sacraments, which either have no signification unto them, or else when their significations are lost and forgotten; for then, no doubt, they are not commended of God, but are rather abominable. For when we know not what they mean, then seek we health in the outward deed, and so are injurious unto Christ and his blood....Let us therefore seek up the significations, and go to the very thing which the sacrament is set to present unto us, and there shall we find such fruitful food as shall never fail us, but comfort our souls into life everlasting.²

If the emphasis is placed upon the thing signified by the Sacrament, one may ask why have the Sacraments?

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 334.

2. Ibid., pp. 334, 335.

Anticipating this question, Frith answers with three purposes of the Sacraments. The first purpose is that of necessity. This he takes from Augustine who said that men can not be formed into a fellowship unless there are "some visible tokens or sacraments, the power of which sacraments is of such efficacy that cannot be expressed."¹ For by these Sacraments they may be knit into a fellowship of the people of God. The second purpose is that they are means of grace. Sacraments "...may be a means to bring us unto faith, and to imprint it the deeper in us; for it doth customably the more move a man to believe, when he perceiveth the thing expressed to diverse senses at once."² This thesis will be elaborated in the course of the discussion, but a preliminary quotation may here be included.

Christ promised them that he would give his body to be slain for their sins; and for to establish the faith of his promise in them, he did institute the sacrament, which he called his body, to the intent that the very name itself might put them in remembrance what was meant by it. He brake the bread before them, signifying unto them outwardly, even the same thing that he, by his word, had before protested; and even as his words had informed them by their hearing, that he intended so to do, so the breaking of that bread informed their eyesight that he would fulfil his promise. Then he did distribute it among them, to imprint the matter more deeply in them: signifying thereby, that even as that bread was divided among them, so should his body and fruit of his passion be distributed unto as many as believed his words. Finally, he caused them to eat it, that nothing should be lacking to confirm that necessary point of faith in them: signifying thereby,

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 332.

2. Ibid., p. 332.

th that as verily as they felt that bread within them, so sure should they be of his body through faith. And that even as that bread doth nourish the body, so doth faith in his body-breaking nourish the soul unto everlasting life. This did our merciful Saviour, which knoweth our frailty and weakness, to establish and strengthen their [sic] faith in his body-breaking and blood-shedding, which is our shot-anchor and last refuge, without which we should all perish.¹

The third purpose of the Sacraments is the occasion of affording an opportunity for thanksgiving and witness.

They that have received these blessed tidings and word of health, do love to publish this felicity unto other men, and to give thanks before the face of the congregation unto their bounteous benefactor, and as much as in them is, to draw all people to the praising of God with them: which thing, though it be partly done by the preaching of God's word and fruitful exhortations, yet doth that visible token and sacrament, if a man understand what is meant thereby, more effectually work in them both faith and thanksgiving, than doth the bare word.²

From this preliminary statement it is evident that Frith adopted a high view of the Sacraments. He chose the via media between the external overemphasis of the traditionalists, on the one hand, and the minimization of the signs by the radical Reformers such as the Anabaptists on the Continent, on the other hand.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

One of the stock arguments used by the 16th century Traditionalists to confute those who opposed their view of transubstantiation was the argument from antiquity. More had used it against Fish in his

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 333.

2. Ibid., pp. 333, 334.

Supplication of Souls, and now against Frith who according to More, contended "...agaynste the hole trew Catholyke Chyrche thys xv. C. yere togyder."¹ This argument, however, was more of a rhetorical device than a factual support, for Gardiner² and Tunstall³ both admitted that transubstantiation became an article of faith only with Innocent III.

Transubstantiation, therefore, was not the Church's doctrine from the earliest times. It first appeared in 831 A.D. when Paschasius Radbertus presented his treatise, De Corpore et Sanguine Domini, to his disciple, Placidus. In 844 a second edition was prepared for Charles the Bald. Although Radbertus was careful to emphasize the spiritual character of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, he believed the substance of the bread and wine were changed at the words of institution into the flesh and blood of Christ. The change was an inward one and not perceptible to sight or taste.⁴

Radbertus' thesis did not pass unchallenged. At the request of Charles the Bald, Ratramnus wrote under the same title, De Corpore et Sanguine Domini.⁵

1. Rogers, The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More, "To John Frith", p. 444.

2. Gardiner, An Explication and Assertion of the True Catholic Faith in Crammer, P.S. p. 239.

3. Sturge, Cuthbert Tunstall, p. 333.

4. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, IV, 547.

5. This treatise was erroneously attributed to John Scotus Erigena. He did teach, however, in his book De Divisione Naturae substantially the same position held by Ratramnus. Schaff, op. cit., IV, 551.

The elements, according to Ratramnus, in nature remain bread and wine; in power and spiritual efficacy they are the very body and blood of Christ in a mystery. The bread and wine retain their properties to the senses, but inwardly they proclaim Christ to the minds of the faithful without any material change in the bread and wine.¹

In the eleventh century there arose a controversy between Berengarius and Lanfranc on the subject of the Eucharist. Public opinion was already such that Berengarius was condemned unheard at Rome in 1050 and compelled in 1059 to accept the view of the synod at Rome. This view is significant because it reflects the accepted doctrine both of the 11th and 16th century traditionalists. Lanfranc propounded the view:

...that the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are after consecration not only a sacrament but also the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that with the senses not only by way of sacrament but in reality these are held and broken by the hands of the priest and are crushed by the teeth of the faithful.²

Finally in the 13th century, the 4th Lateran Council solemnly framed as an article of faith the medieval doctrine of transubstantiation.

Moreover, there is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one whatever can be saved, in which Jesus is at the one time Priest and Sacrifice. His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrifice of the altar under the appearance of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body, and the wine, into the blood by divine power, so that for the effecting of the mystery of unity, we receive of His what He

1. Ratramnus, De Corpore Et Sanguine Domini, (tr. by W. F. Taylor), passim.
2. Lanfranc, De Corpore Et Sanguine as quoted from Dugmore, Eucharistic Doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland, p. 25.

received of ours. This sacrament especially no one can administer but the Priest who had been duly ordained according to the authority of the Church.¹

Although the Schoolmen explained their doctrine of transubstantiation in such metaphysical terms that the crude materialism was theoretically absent, yet the metaphysical problems were staggering and presented choice subjects for debate between the Realists, who clung to a carnal interpretation, and the Nominalists, who opposed the more crude point of view.² If the Schoolmen had trouble understanding how the accidents of the elements could exist apart from the substance, it is little wonder that the masses and the majority of the clergy rationalized the Lord's Supper into a carnal Sacrament.³ It should be noted that the preachers and people knew nothing of the 17th and 18th century substitutions for substance and accidents as respectively reality and appearance.⁴ This crude materialism of popular belief often found expression in the language of some ecclesiastical writers, which resulted in the excessive attention given to the moment of consecration. This in turn, paved the way for the elevation of the Sacrament for the purpose of worship, the withdrawal of the cup from the laity, and the less frequent observance of communion.⁵

1. Barclay, The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper, pp. 19-20.

2. Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation, I, 86.

3. Cranmer, Works, P.S. I, 328.

4. Maynard-Smith, Pre-Reformation England, p. 277.

5. Dugmore, op. cit., p. 27.

Frith attacked the traditionalist doctrine at a time when it was virtually unopposed. Wycliffe in the 14th century and the Lollards in the 15th had created ferments of dissatisfaction in many parts of England with alarming success. But in the first quarter of the 16th century Lollard opposition was weak and failed to present a serious challenge to the deep seated doctrine of transubstantiation. Consequently, the minute distinctions between the body of Christ and the bread in the Supper were largely matters relegated to clerical discussions. The common people communicating at the altar understood that the bread, accidents as well as substance, was the body of Christ. While Frith mainly attacked this popular conception of the Sacrament, he also included cogent arguments against the more subtle nature of the doctrine.¹ As a true son of the "New Learning", Frith was not concerned with the metaphysical arguments of the Scholastics, and he refused "...to spend labour and paper about Aristotle's doctrine..."² His arguments were taken from Scripture, the Church Fathers and reason.

Frith's first argument against transubstantiation was taken from the Scriptures. If the bread was changed into the body of Christ after consecration, he could not understand why the Scriptures would call the sacramental elements bread even after consecration.

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1. With a touch of humor he calls these arguments against his opponents "bones fit for their teeth, which if they be too busy, may chance to choke them."
Frith, op. cit., p. 335.
 2. Ibid., p. 402.

Paul referred to the Sacrament as bread in I Cor. X and in I Cor. II he said, "As often as ye eat of this bread, or drink of this cup, you shall show the Lord's death until He come." And in Acts II Luke calls it bread also, saying, "They continued in the fellowship of the Apostles, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." Christ also refers to the Sacrament as "the cup, the fruit of the vine..." (Luke XXII).¹

Secondly, transubstantiation may be disproved by reason. Since the traditionalists taught not only that the elements at the moment of consecration became the body and blood of Christ, but that the elements no longer remained bread and wine, but the very body and blood of Christ perpetually, Frith asks why does the bread become mouldy if left for a period of time? The wine likewise after consecration remains wine because if left for a period of time it sours.

And surely, as if there remained no bread, it could not mould, nor wear full of worms; even so if there remained no wine, it could not wear sour: and therefore it is but false doctrine that our prelates so long have published.²

The third argument against transubstantiation was taken from the testimony of the Fathers. This argument was especially valid during Frith's time, because the chief argument of More and other traditionalists was that of antiquity. If one side used this type of argument, it was legitimate and necessary for the other to

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 342, 343.

2. Ibid., p. 343.

use it. Frith quoted from Gelasius who wrote in his Contra Eutych. et Nestorium:

Surely the Sacraments of the body and blood of Christ are a godly thing, and therefore through them are we made partakers of the godly nature; and yet doth it not cease to be the substance or nature of bread and wine, but they continue in the property of their own nature; and surely the image and similitude of the body and blood of Christ are celebrated in the act of the mysteries.¹

In connection with the above quotation from Gelasius, one wonders why Frith omitted a theological argument which Cranmer and Peter Martyr² urged against transubstantiation with great force. This argument was stated by Gelasius, in connection with the Eutychian controversy. Gelasius reasoned that since Christ has two natures, Divine and human, and yet is one person, so also by analogy they are represented in the Sacrament by bread and body of Christ. The traditionalists rejected this analogy by their theory of transubstantiation and therefore associated themselves with the Eutychian heresy, which refused to accept the two natures of Christ.³

Sir Thomas More cited miracles which were reported to have occurred in connection with the elements to prove transubstantiation. Frith answered that most of these were the delusions of Satan and one of the means of detracting the faithful from Christ.

And therefore when they tell me, Lo here is Christ,
1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 343, 344.

2. MacLelland, Peter Martyr's Doctrine of the Sacrament, passim.

3. Cranmer, Works, P.S. I, 278.

lo, there is Christ, (as Christ prophesied,) lo, he is at this altar, lo, he is at that, I will not believe them.¹

If these miracles, Frith reasons, prove the elements to be the body of Christ, what do the miracles resulting from baptism prove? Can they prove that the water is the Holy Spirit? "And yet the water is not the Holy Ghost, nor the very thing itself whereof it is a Sacrament."² So the elements cannot be the very body and blood of Christ, just as all agree that the water is not the Holy Ghost. There seems to be an echo and an elaboration of this argument in the work of Cranmer when he says:

But forasmuch as he is joined to the bread but sacramentally, there followeth no impanation thereof, no more than the Holy Ghost is inadequate, that is to say, made water, being sacramentally joined to the water in baptism.³

Sir Thomas More advanced another argument for transubstantiation from the sixth of John where Christ said "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:51) From this More reasoned that Christ's "...flesh is verily mete, and His blode is verily drynke."⁴ Frith brushed aside this argument because most scholars did not see any reference to the

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 419.

2. Ibid., p. 419.

3. Cranmer, Works, P.S. I, 305.

4. Rogers, op. cit., p. 442.

Sacrament in John VI. However, he mentions the fact that the words of John VI occur a few years before the institution of the Sacrament and could not thus refer to the Sacrament. Furthermore, the passage itself militates against the carnal understanding since Christ speaks of the spiritual eating by faith of the bread which comes from heaven.

Then, addeth St. Austin, you shall know that he meant not to give his flesh to eat with your teeth; for he shall ascend whole. And Christ addeth, It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak are spirit and life; that is to say, saith St. Austin, are spiritually to be understood. And where Christ saith that the flesh profiteth nothing, meaning of his own flesh, as St. Austin saith, he meaneth that it profiteth not as they understood him; that is to say, it profiteth not if it were eaten.¹

Frith was quick to reinforce his arguments against transubstantiation by quoting a decisive passage from Augustine on the meaning of John VI. In commenting on this passage the Latin Father said:

Whensoever the Scripture, or Christ, seemeth to command any foul or wicked thing, then must that text be taken figuratively; that is, it is a phrase, allegory, and manner of speaking, and must be understood spiritually, and not after the letter.²

Not only had Frith refuted More's argument which was based on John VI, but by this quotation of Augustine, he provided the key to the interpretation of Christ's words, "This is my body". For in this context they could only be understood figuratively.

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 354.

2. Ibid., p. 356.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN THE SACRAMENT

According to the traditionalist doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the elements actually became the body and blood of Christ after the words of consecration were pronounced by the priest. This meant that Christ was present to the communicant in the same body which He had on earth. The presence of Christ was not only mystical but corporal. Against this corporal presence, Frith argued that Christ was in heaven and not in the Sacrament after the flesh, for Christ Himself said:

Yet a little while am I with you, and then I depart to him that sent me. And again, It is expedient for you that I depart; for except that I depart, that Comforter shall not come unto you. And again he saith, I forsake the world and go to my Father. And, to be short, he saith, Poor men ye shall ever have with you, but me shall you not ever have.¹

Cranmer refuted the doctrine of the corporal presence on the basis of the Apostle's Creed and concluded: "This hath been ever the catholic faith of christian people, that Christ (as concerning His body and His manhood) is in heaven, and shall there continue until He come down at the last judgement."²

Frith also argued his point from the standpoint of theology. Since Christ was in one place during the institution of the supper, He could not have been present in the elements on the night when the disciples first partook of the Supper. Neither before nor after

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 393.

2. Cranmer, op. cit., I, 93.

His resurrection, could Christ be present corporally in the Sacrament, for Augustine said, "His body, wherein he rose, must be in one place, but his truth is dispersed in all places."¹ More objected that this merely meant that Christ is in one place and that Augustine says nothing about His being in all places. Frith, however, rejected this bit of clever reasoning because Augustine's intent was to prove that since Christ's truth is everywhere, His body is in one place only. Frith illustrated this from an analogy to the king. When we say that the king's body is in one place while his power is throughout the realm, it does not mean that the king's body may be anywhere besides the one place. Otherwise the antithesis would be destroyed. Frith, however, confident of the impossibility, challenged More to prove that one body may occupy more than one place at one time.²

By insisting upon the corporal presence of Christ, the traditionalists, according to Frith were rejuvenating the old christological heresies. The Edwardian Reformers advanced the same criticism with more devastating effect. Ridley, for instance, said, "the doctrine of the presence of Christ giveth occasion to the heretics, who erred concerning the two natures in Christ, to defend their heresies thereby."³ Frith based his christological

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 385.

2. Ibid., p. 387.

3. Ridley, Works, P.S. p. 198.

argument on Augustine, who said:

We must beware that we do not so affirm the divinity of the man, that we take away the truth of his body. For it followeth not, that the thing which is in God, should be in every place as God is. For the Scripture doth truly testify on us, that we live, move and be in him. And yet are we not in every place as He is: howbeit that man is otherwise in God, and God otherwise in that man, by a certain peculiar and singular way; for God and man is one person, and both of them one Christ Jesus, which is in every place, in that he is God, and in heaven, in that he is man.¹

If the body of Christ is present corporally in the Sacrament, the christological doctrine of the two natures is violated and confused. Frith concludes:

...if we should grant Christ to be in all places, as touching his manhood, we should take away the truth of his body; for though his manhood be in God, and God in his manhood, yet it followeth not that it should be in every place, as God is; and ...as touching his Godhead, he is in every place, and as touching his manhood, he is in heaven.²

Following Augustine again Frith reasons that if Christ was not limited to the earth in His incarnation, then one virtually denies the incarnation and merely makes a phantom of the body of Christ. For Augustine says:

As touching his manhood, he was in the earth, and not in heaven, (where he is now), when he said, No man ascendeth into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man, which is in heaven.³

If then, in His incarnation Christ was in heaven as well as earth and in all places at once, "they...do take away the truth of his natural body, and make it a

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 387.

2. Ibid., p. 387.

3. Ibid., p. 388.

very fantastical body: from the which heresy God deliver his faithful!"¹

Frith quoted another Patristic source in defence of his argument against the corporal presence of Christ in the Sacrament. This was the pertinent statement of Fulgentius who was concerned mainly with the refutation of Christological heresies.

The same one man is local (that is to say, contained in one place), as touching his manhood, which is also God unmeasurable from the father: the same one man, as touching the substance of his manhood, was absent from heaven, when he was in earth, and forsaking the earth, when he ascended into heaven; but as touching his godly and unmeasurable substance, neither forsook heaven when he descended from heaven, nor forsook the earth when he ascended unto heaven: Which may be known by the most sure word of the Lord, which, to show his humanity to be local (that is to say, contained in one place only), did say unto his disciples, I ascend unto my father and your father, my God and your God: of Lazarus also, when he said, Lazarus is dead, he said farther, I am glad for your sakes (that you may believe) for that I was not there. And again, showing the unmeasurableness of his Godhead, he said unto his disciples, Behold I am with you unto the world's end. How did he ascend into heaven, but because he is local and a very man? Or how is he present unto his faithful, but because he is unmeasurable and very God?²

Theologically, the conclusion for Frith was simple.

Christ according to His body was not in the Sacrament, but in heaven.³ Otherwise, the alternative would be heresy, on the basis of Scripture and the Church Fathers.

Frith and Tyndale rejected the sacramental views of Luther. Regarding the presence of Christ in

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 388.

2. Ibid., pp. 389-390.

3. Frith does not refer to the assent in the Spirit to Christ, but merely refers to Christ's presence as a mystery.

the Sacrament, Luther argued for a corporal presence on the basis of the ubiquitous nature of Christ. For the conjunction of the two natures in Christ implies a communicatio idiomatum, i.e. a transference of the attributes of the one nature to the other. Thus the risen body of Christ possessed the Divine attribute of omnipresence and therefore He was present bodily in and under the consecrated bread. The distinction between the views of Luther and the traditionalists lay in the refusal of Luther to accept the metaphysical view of a change in substance of the bread into the body of Christ. Nevertheless, Christ was really present along with the substance of the bread and Luther regarded the manducatio impiorum as a final test of any theory of the real presence.¹ This doctrine was championed in England by Robert Barnes, but the majority of the English Reformers rejected it in favor of the intermediate position of the Strassburg Reformers. Frith refuted the Lutheran view not only by arguments circumscribing the risen body of Christ to heaven, but also by showing that the ubiquity of Christ proves too much. For then Christ in His body would be everywhere and not only in the Sacrament.

...where I say that they can show no reason why he should be in many places and not in all, is thus to be understood of wise men: that the very reason and cause that he should be in many places, must be because the body is so annexed with the Godhead, that

1. Watt, "Eucharist" in the Hastings's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, V, pp. 565-566.

it is in every place as the Godhead is....this cause is proved false by Scripture, for when the woman sought Christ at his grave, an angel gave the answer that he was not there. But if his body had been in every place, then the angel lied....1

Although Frith does not mention Luther or his disciple, Barnes, he nevertheless delivers a devastating blow to the only important difference between the Reformed and the Lutheran teachings in England prior to 1533.

The traditionalists, however, were certain that the words, "This is my body" referred to the bodily presence of Christ in the Sacrament. This being so, Frith labored much to prove that the words do not substantiate a bodily presence. This phrase was not to be understood literally, but spiritually as Frith explained:

And as touching the other words that Christ spake unto his disciples at the Last Supper, I deny not but that he said so; but that he so fleshly meant, as ye falsely fain, I utterly deny. For I say that his words were then also spirit and life, and were spiritually to be understood; and that he called it his body; for a certain property, even as he called himself a very vine, and his disciples very vine-branches, and as he called himself a door; not that he was so in deed, but for certain properties in the similitudes: ...and like as Jacob builded an altar, and called it the house of God; and as Jacob called the place where he wrestled with the angel, the face of God; and as the Paschal Lamb was called the passing by of the Lord; and as a broken potsherd was called Jerusalem....2

Frith was well acquainted with the writings of the Church Fathers and found several passages to support a figurative interpretation of Christ's words, "This is my body." Against the heretic, Marcion, Tertullian wrote:

1. Frith, op. cit., pp 403-405.

2. Ibid., p. 348.

Christ, taking bread and distributing unto his disciples, made it his body, saying, This is my body; that is to say, a figure of my body. But this bread could not have been a figure of it, except Christ had had a true body; for a vain thing or a fantasy can take no figure.¹

Augustine likewise spoke of the figurative interpretation of Christ's words of institution. Commenting on the patience of Christ to allow Judas to partake of the Supper, Augustine wrote:

He admitted him unto the Maundy, wherein he did betake and deliver unto the disciples the figure of his body and blood.²

And more explicit concerning the spiritual understanding of the Supper was Augustine in the following text:

You shall not eat this body that you see, nor drink that blood which they that crucify me shall shed out: I have given a certain Sacrament unto you if it be spiritually understood it quickeneth you.³

To Augustine's testimony Frith added that of Ambrose, who wrote:

The priest saith, Make us this oblation acceptable, for it is a figure of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

The testimony from the above Fathers along with those of Jerome, Chrysostom and Fulgentius provided arguments for a powerful attack on a literal interpretation of "This is my body".

In support of the figurative interpretation,

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 363.

2. Ibid., p. 363.

3. Ibid., p. 364.

4. Ibid., p. 369.

Frith also advanced the analogy of the Passover with the Eucharist. Zwingli had developed this argument in his Subsidium in August, 1525, in answer to his opponents who charged him with the fallacy of using parables to support his symbolical interpretation. Scripture allows this analogy for Paul in I Cor. V.7 says, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us." Frith took up this argument and in twelve comparisons he demonstrated the relationship between the Passover and the Lord's Supper. From his comparisons Frith deduced another argument for the figurative understanding of the Lord's Supper, since the Passover could only be interpreted figuratively.¹

Zwingli culminated the argument by saying "If a thing as gross as the corporal eating has not been imposed on a people as gross as the Jews of the Old Covenant, how would it be imposed on us who possess the Spirit, and who have passed from darkness into light."²

Another argument for the figurative interpretation of Christ's words, "This is my body" was derived from the analogy between the Church and the body of Christ. Here Frith follows Augustine who wrote:

If you will understand the body of Christ, hear the apostle, which saith, Ye are the body of Christ and members, I Cor XII. Therefore, if ye be the body of Christ's members your mystery is put upon the Lord's table; ye receive the mystery of the Lord unto that you are; you answer Amen; and in answering subscribe unto it.³

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 424-428.

2. Zwingli, Subsidium as quoted in Barclay, op. cit., p. 59.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 380.

In the Sacrament the elements not only represent the body and blood of Christ, but also the body of His Church. But no one would say that the Church is physically the elements of the Supper. Therefore, the only interpretation possible is the figurative one. And Frith concludes:

Now, where he saith, that we are joined and incorporate with Christ, what fondness were it to contend, since we are there only in a mystery, and not naturally, - to contend, I say, with such pertinacity, that his natural body must be there; and not rather that he is joined with us, as we are joined with him, and both in a mystery, by the knot of perfect charity.¹

All of this reasoning on the part of Frith to establish a figurative meaning of the words, "This is my body" would tend to leave the impression that he was urging tropism where the elements are merely commemorative signs of holy things. This, however, is not Frith's complete teaching. Since he contended against the carnal view of the Supper he devoted much space to negative argumentation for he felt the necessity of refuting the arguments of the traditionalists. There was, however, a positive emphasis in which Frith went beyond tropism. He was not adverse to substituting "signify" in place of "is" in Christ's words, "This is my body". For in a sense the Sacrament does signify the body of Christ. But this is at the lowest level of interpretation. On a higher level these words are to be spiritually interpreted by the use of metonymy by which the sign takes the very name of the things represented. Frith gleaned this bit of

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 383.

knowledge from the writings of Augustine who explained in what sense the elements may be called the body and blood of Christ. According to Augustine when the Easter season draws near it is customary to say that tomorrow or the next day is the Lord's passion, not meaning that Christ shall be crucified again, for he was crucified only once. Now we call Good Friday the day of the passion after a similitude of the original passion day, which is the same only by reason of the likeness in the revolution of time. Because of the similitude, Good Friday takes the name of the very day on which Christ died. So it is with the Sacraments: "for if they had not certain similitudes of those things whereof they are Sacraments, then should they be no Sacraments at all." Then Augustine applies the analogy in the following words:

And for this similitude, for the most part, they take the names of the very things; and therefore, as after a certain manner the Sacrament of Christ's body is Christ's body, and Sacrament of Christ's blood is Christ's blood, so the Sacrament of faith is faith. For it is no other thing to believe, than to have faith; and therefore, when a man answereth that the infant believeth, which hath not the effect of faith, he answereth that it hath faith for the Sacrament of faith; and that it turneth itself to God for the Sacrament of conversion: for the answer itself pertaineth unto the ministering of the Sacrament. As the apostle writeth of baptism, We are buried, saith he, with Christ, through baptism, unto death. He saith not we signify burying, but utterly saith we are buried. He called, therefore, the Sacrament of so great a thing, even with the name of the very thing itself.¹

Frith adopted Augustine's explanation of the sign and Sacrament for in this way he felt the Scriptures

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 365-366.

should be interpreted. He was not content to point out that the word "signify" should be used in place of the verb "is" in the words, "This is my body", but the deeper meaning that the Sacrament is the body of Christ in a mystery.

...though the Sacrament do but signify or represent his body, yet may we truly say that it is his body. Why so? verily, saith he, for the Sacraments have a certain similitude of those things whereof they are Sacraments: and for this similitude, for the most part, they take the names of the very things.¹

That this is the right understanding may be seen from Paul's words, "We are buried", and not, we signify burying, and yet the baptism does signify that we are buried. Similarly, the Scriptural phrases "the blood is the soul", and Christ was the stone" are not to be understood literally.² By metonymy, therefore, are we to understand the words of Christ, "This is my body".

Although Frith rejected a corporal presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, nevertheless he did believe that Christ was really present. His presence, however, was only possible dynamically and in a mystery through faith. This conception was taken from Ratramnus who in 831 A.D. developed the idea of Christ's presence in the Supper after a mystery. In acknowledging his indebtedness to Ratramnus Frith remarks:

This reason is not mine, but it is made by one Bartram Ratramnus upon 700 years since, when this matter was first in disputation. Whereupon, at the instance of Charles the Emperor, he made a book, professing even the same thing that I do, and proveth by the old doctors and faithful fathers, that the Sacrament is

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 366.
2. Ibid., p. 349.

Christ's body in a mystery, that is to say, a sign, figure, or memorial, of his body, which was broken for us, and not his natural body.¹

Christ then is no less present in the Sacrament now, than when He was here on earth. The difference is only that instead of a bodily presence, there is the real and spiritual presence of Christ in the Sacrament to all through faith.

Christ then is present spiritually and mysteriously in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to Frith.

Moreover, the bread is Christ's body, even as the breaking of the bread is the death of his body. Now the breaking of the bread at the Maundy is not the very death of Christ's body, but only a representation of the same, albeit the mind, through faith, doth spiritually behold his very death; and even, likewise, that natural bread is not the very body of our Lord, but only a sacrament, sign, memorial, or representation of this same, albeit, through the monition thereof, the mind, through faith, doth spiritually behold the very body: and surely, thereof if a man be faithful, the Spirit of God worketh in his heart very sweetly at his communion.²

...I will not deny but that these holy doctors, Church Fathers in divers places, do call it his body, as Christ and Paul do, and so do we likewise, and say also that his very body is there eaten. But yet we mean that it is eaten with faith, (that is to say, by believing that his body was broken for us,) and have his body more in memory at this Maundy than the meat that we there eat. And therefore it hath the name of his body, because the name itself should put us in remembrance of his body, and that his body is there chiefly eaten, even more (through faith) than the meat with the mouth.³

And as surely as we have that bread and eat it with our mouth and teeth, and know by our senses that we have it within us, and are partakers thereof; no more need we to doubt of his body and blood, but that through faith we are as sure of them, as we are sure of that bread...⁴

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 382.

2. Ibid., p. 396

3. Ibid., pp. 412-413.

4. Ibid., p. 446.

In a real sense Christ is present in the Sacrament. How He is present is beyond human cognition except that He is there in a mystery. Although the mystery was not explained by Frith, yet he insisted on the dynamic presence of Christ. He was there spiritually to impart grace to the communicant as Ratramnus, quoted by Frith, said:

In this mystery of the body and blood, is a spiritual operation, which giveth life; without the which operation, those mysteries do nothing profit; for surely, saith he, they may feed the body, but the soul they cannot feed.¹

COMMUNICATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

One of the great differences between the 16th century traditionalists and Frith lay in the communicant's role in the Sacrament. The priest's actions became the central interest while the people's participation was only incidental as was evidenced by the denial of the cup to the laity.

Frith argued against this extreme objectivity of the priest's role. Firmly believing that the act of consecration was overemphasized, Frith pointed out that consecration as the Fathers spoke of it was basically the application of something to a holy use.² And this must the believer do when participating in the Sacrament. He consecrates it by believing what is signified by the Sacrament, and by giving thanks for Christ's body-

1. Ratramnus, op. cit., p. 23; Frith, op. cit., p. 392.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 379.

breaking and blood-shedding.¹ The priest's consecration should be the preaching of the death of Christ and His work of redemption instead of "their wagging...their fingers over it."²

The most abominable practice of the traditionalists in the eyes of Frith was the adoration of the host. Although Sir Thomas More drew subtle distinctions between honoring the host and actually worshipping it, Frith, nevertheless called it idolatry.

...men fall down and worship it, and, thinking to please God, do damnably sin against him. ...if you will also grant, - and publish but this one proposition, that it ought not to be worshipped, I promise you I will never write against it.³

The adoration of the host must have been odious to Frith if he was willing to cease writing against the traditionalist's view only if the adoration of the host were abolished.

On the positive side Frith presents his ideas on the true eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. To eat the body of Christ is not a carnal experience, but wholly a spiritual one. Although John VI is not basically descriptive of the Sacrament yet it refers to the spiritual eating of Christ. In the following words Frith describes the nature of the spiritual eating:

...Christ's words must here be understood spiritually; and that he calleth his flesh very meat, because, that as meat, by the eating of it and digesting it in

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 415.

2. Ibid., p. 417.

3. Ibid., p. 413.

our body, doth strengthen these corruptible members, so likewise doth Christ's flesh, by the believing that it taketh our sin upon itself, and suffered the death to deliver us and strengthen our immortal soul. And likewise, as drink when it is drunken doth comfort and quicken our frail nature, so likewise doth Christ's blood, by the drinking of it into the bowels of our soul, that is by the believing and remembering that it is shed for our sins, comfort and quicken our soul unto everlasting life.¹

This spiritual eating and drinking is necessary "for there is no man that cometh to God without this eating of Christ, that is the believing in him."² And although the communicant feeds on Christ as he eats the sacramental elements, he is not restricted in eating and drinking to the Sacrament, but he may enjoy Christ apart from the Sacrament.³

Frith also appealed to the judgement of the Fathers on the spiritual eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ. Augustine in commenting on John VI said, "Why preparest thou either tooth or belly? believe, and thou hast eaten him."⁴ Eating and drinking, therefore, in a sense is nothing more than believing in Christ. Frith next quoted Jerome who draws a parallel between the Scriptures and the Sacrament. For just as we feed on the Word of God by reading Scriptures, so do we feed on Christ when partaking of the elements through faith. Thus Frith concludes:

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 347.

2. Ibid., p. 348.

3. Ibid., p. 348.

4. Ibid., p. 347.

...as meat and drink comfort the body and outward man, so doth the reading and knowledge of Scripture comfort the soul and inward man. And likewise it is of Christ's body, which is called very meat and very drink, which you must needs understand in a mystery, or spiritaual sense, as St. Jerome called it; for his body is no material meat nor drink that is received with the mouth or teeth, but it is spiritual meat and drink, and so called for a similitude and property; because, that as meat and drink comforteth the body, so doth the faith in his body-breaking and blood-shedding refresh the soul into life everlasting.¹

The eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ as a spiritual experience of the soul is similar to the eating of the angels. For their meat is only the joy and delight that they have of God and of His glory. So it is with the soul which eats the body of Christ through faith, although the body of Christ be in heaven.

...for it delighteth and rejoiceth while it understandeth through faith, that Christ hath taken our sins upon him, and pacified the Father's wrath. Neither is it necessary, that for that or for this cause his flesh should be present; for a man may as well love and rejoice in the thing which is from him and not present, as though it were present by him of that manner.²

Therefore to eat the body of Christ is to believe in Him, and spiritually to feed on Him although He is not present bodily in the Sacrament.

In order to understand the spiritual eating of Christ in the Sacrament, Frith drew an analogy from the Old Testament. He quoted Augustine to the effect that the same faith that saves us, saved the Old Testament saints. This is true because the Word, although before

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 370.

2. Ibid., p. 396.

and blood of the Lord, one must have faith. The wicked may partake of the elements, but they neither receive the body of Christ nor any spiritual benefit. That the wicked may not eat the body of Christ is clear from the analogy of Mary who coming to Christ was not allowed to touch Him because she was lacking in faith. Similarly the wicked lack faith and, therefore, they shall not eat the body of Christ.¹

On the contrary the wicked eat to their own damnation when they partake of the Sacrament as Frith remarks:

For he that eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his ~~won~~ damnation, because he maketh no difference of the Lord's body: that is, as it is said before, he that regardeth not the purpose for which it was instituted, and putteth no difference between his eating and other eating. For other eating doth only serve the belly, but this eating was instituted and ordained to serve the soul and inward man. And therefore he that abuseth it to the flesh, eateth and drinketh his own damnation, and he cometh unworthily to the Maundy where the Sacrament of Christ's body is eaten: yea, where the body of the Lord is eaten, not carnally with the teeth and belly, but spiritually with the heart and faith.²

Frith did not believe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was a bare sign. On the contrary it was an efficacious sign which if communicated properly, imparted grace to the believer. Without defining the nature of this grace elaborately Frith likened it to the grace which is imparted from reading the Holy Scriptures with faith. Since the Holy Spirit's primary task is to

1. Frith, op. cit., 393.

2. Ibid., p. 438.

reveal Christ through the Scriptures, we may conclude by saying that the grace imparted in the Sacrament is none other than Christ. It may be well to quote Frith in full along these lines, for his view carefully preserves the efficacy of the Sacrament without taking on a mechanical aspect.

We give it the same honour that we give unto the holy Scripture and word of God, because it expresseth unto our senses the death of our Saviour, and doth more deeply print it within us. And therefore we call it an holy Sacrament, as we call God's word holy Scripture. And we receive this Sacrament with great reverence, even as we reverently read or hear preached the holy word of God which containeth the health of our souls. And we grant that his body is present with the bread as it is with the word; and with both it is verily received and eaten through faith.¹

What is offered, then, both through the Scriptures and the Sacraments, is not some elusive theory of grace, but Christ Himself.

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the celebration of the Mass the traditionalists taught that a propitiatory sacrifice was repeated each time the Mass was performed. It is true that a differentiation was made between the two sacrifices, the original sacrifice of Christ and the repetition of it in the Mass. The original sacrifice was referred to as the "bloody" sacrifice, while in the Mass, it was referred to as the "unbloody" sacrifice. But in reality this meant that the sacrifice of Christ was recommitted before the people in view of the fact that the traditionalists called

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 446.

it a propitiatory sacrifice.¹ This opinion was rejected by Frith on the ground that "...Christ's body was offered on the cross once for all: for he can be sacrificed no more, seeing he is immortal."² What then is the meaning of the term "sacrifice" which is used so often by the early Church Fathers, especially Chrysostom? Frith begins with a quotation from Chrysostom.

Do we not daily offer, or do sacrifice? Yes, surely; but we do it for the remembrance of his death. For this sacrifice is an example of that we offer; not another sacrifice, as the bishops in the old law did, but ever the same, yea, rather a remembrance of the sacrifice.³

Frith understands and interprets this quotation in the following imaginary dialogue:

Why, Chrysostom, and do you the self-same sacrifice every day? Yea, verily. Then why doth St. Paul say, that Christ is risen from death, and dieth no more? If he die no more, how do you daily crucify him? Forsooth, Paul saith truth; for we do not actually, indeed, but only in a mystery; and yet we say that we do sacrifice him, and that this is his sacrifice, for the celebration of the Sacrament and memory of the passion which we keep. And for this cause it hath the name of the thing that it doth represent and signify, and therefore I expound my mind by a rhetorical correction, and say, magis recordationem sacrificii; that is to say, yea, rather the remembrance of the sacrifice.⁴

The Early Fathers used the term "sacrifice" in the same sense which they used the term "Sacrament" to mean the very body of Christ. In this sense, according to Frith

1. Mozley, Lectures and Other Theological Papers, quoted by Kidd, The Later Medieval Doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, p. 116.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 374.

3. Ibid., p. 374.

4. Ibid., p. 375.

"...many times the Mass is called a sacrifice of holy doctors, and as the Sacrament is called the body and a sacrifice, and hath the name of the very same thing it doth represent and signify."¹

The true sacrifice, however, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of thanksgiving for God's goodness and redemption.² For the members of the Church are joined together in one fellowship into the body of Christ, just as the bread is made up of many grains and the wine of many grapes, and all offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for the broken body of Christ which was given for their redemption.³

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 376.

2. Ibid., pp. 350-351.

3. Ibid., p. 430.

CHAPTER VIII

BAPTISM

A myrroure

of lohyng glasse wherein
you may beholde the
Sacramente of
baptisme de-
scribed.

Inno. D. D. rrrlii.

Per me J. F.

He that wyl beleaue and
be baptised, shalbe sa-
ued. But he that
wil not beleaue
shall be con-
demned.
Mar. xvi.

CHAPTER VIII

BAPTISM

OCCASION OF WRITING

The traditionalist teaching on baptism which was inherited from the Schoolmen and became current in the 16th century annoyed Frith and provided the occasion for his writing. He believed the traditionalist teaching led to "...manifold and lamentable errors wherewith not the ignorant people only, but also the learned," were led from the right path.¹ He then adds, "...I thought it expedient therein to write my mind, trusting, by that means, to bring again the blind hearts of many into the right way," which effort he believed to be effective since God's elect should easily recognize the truth of his arguments.²

Frith complained specifically of two errors. "They put so great confidence in the outward sign, that without discretion they condemn the infants, which die or they be baptized, unto everlasting pain."³ The second error was the tendency of the people to place too much confidence in external ceremonies:

...that they think if a drunken priest leave out a word, as Volo say ye, or Credo say ye, or forget to put spittle or salt in the child's mouth, that the child is not christened; yea, so much give they thereunto the beggarly salt, that they will say,⁴ "Spill not the salt, for it is our christendom."

1. Frith, Works, p. 283.

2. Ibid., p. 283.

3. Ibid., p. 283.

4. Ibid., p. 283-4.

Similar to Frith's description of baptismal practice is the pungent analysis of Tyndale who in 1528 wrote:

Ask the people what they understand by their baptism or washing? And thou shalt see, that they believe how that the very plunging into the water saveth them: of the promises they know not, nor what is signified thereby. Baptism is called volowing in many places of England; because the priest saith, 'Volo, say ye.' 'The child was well volowed' (say they); ...Behold how narrowly the people look on the ceremony. If ought be left out, or if the child be not altogether dipt in the water, or if, because the child is sick, the priest dare not plunge him into the water, but pour water on his head, how tremble they! how quake they!...They think that if the bishop butter the child in the forehead, that it is safe. They think that the work maketh safe.¹

In his Obedience of a Christian Man Tyndale did much to combat these erroneous views, but in the early years he left it largely (up) to Frith to prepare an evangelical attack on the traditionalist doctrine of baptism.

The sword of error, however, was not a one-edged sword. While the traditionalists overemphasized externals, the Anabaptists stressed the element of personal faith to the extent that infant baptism was excluded. Although Frith agreed with the Anabaptists on some points regarding baptism, he flatly rejected their anti-pedobaptist teachings. He staunchly defended infant baptism, basing his arguments on reason and Scripture.

In passing an observation should be made with regard to the Anabaptists. Frith confirms the view that the Anabaptists in England were few in number prior to

1. Tyndale, Works, P.S. I, 277-8.

1532. He writes:

Now is there an opinion risen among certain, which affirm that children may not be baptised until they come unto a perfect age, and that because they have not faith; but verily, me thinketh that they are far from the meekness of Christ and his Spirit... but this matter will I pass over; for I trust the English have no such opinions.¹

From what evidence there is, we must admit the plausibility of Frith's assumption. The first public notice of foreign Anabaptists in England is contained in a royal proclamation of 1534.² Fox found evidence in the London registers of "...certain Dutchmen counted for Anabaptists" who were apprehended in different parts of the country, ten of whom were put to death in 1535.³ The Convocation of 1536 dealt with the opinions of Anabaptism and passed some decrees against them.⁴ Until it is demonstrated otherwise, Frith's assumption must stand that only a negligible number of Anabaptists were present in England before 1532.

DEFINITION OF BAPTISM

The prevailing definition of baptism during the Reformation period was inherited from the medieval era. The Catechism of Trent reflects a sifting of medieval views and describes baptism as the sacrament of faith, an illumination, a purgation, a planting and burial. It was also referred to as a washing and as the eradication

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 288-9.

2. Smithson, The Anabaptists, pp. 193-4.

3. Foxe, A. and M., V, 44.

4. Wall, The History of Infant Baptism, II, 162.

of original sin in later Greek and Russian usage. Elsewhere it was called our regeneration, and the gateway or door of the Christian life.¹

Erith, as well as other Reformers, was attracted to the signification of the sacrament and he defined baptism in terms of a covenantal relationship. Luther spoke of baptism as a divine covenant of grace given under a visible form. He also defined baptism as a union of word and water, the water being the water of life which is rich in grace, the bath of regeneration.²

Zwingli, however, further developed the covenantal idea. Baptism was a pledge or sign signifying the initiation of the baptized into a new life before God.³ It was the covenant sign of the people of God, and it served as their badge of allegiance.⁴ Although Zwingli held the view that baptism was a public confession, the Anabaptists carried this further and made baptism wholly a public confession and witness to the inward grace which God had given independently of water baptism.⁵

Following Luther, Tyndale defined baptism as a badge or seal of the covenant.

For as circumcision was unto them a common badge,

1. Bromiley, Baptism and the Anglican Reformers, p. 10.

2. Luther, Works W.E., I, 88.

3. "Zwingli and Bullinger", in Library of Christian Classics, (ed. G. Bromiley) XXIV, 131.

4. Ibid., p. 150

5. Vedder, Balthasar Hubmaier, p. 202.

signifying that they were all soldiers of God, to war his war, and separating them from all other nations, disobedient unto God: even so baptism is our common badge, and sure earnest and perpetual memorial, that we pertain unto Christ...¹

Baptism also was the sacrament or sign of repentance as well as washing and new birth.²

At the lowest level Frith defined baptism in somewhat the same way as Zwingli and the Swiss Anabaptists did. According to this definition, baptism was the means whereby the church received those coming into its membership. Frith stresses this idea by saying: "...and through baptism doth the congregation receive him, which was first received through grace of the promise."³ In another place Frith remarks: "...by the which [baptism], as by an outward badge, we are known to be of the number of them which profess Christ to be their Redeemer and Saviour."⁴

On a higher level Frith defined baptism in the context of its signification. Baptism was not only the sign of initiation into the visible church, but in the cases of the genuinely elect it was the sign of reception into the invisible church, the body of Christ. Baptism assured the participant of the divine favour in Jesus Christ, and attested the cleansing operation of Christ's

1. Tyndale, op. cit., P.S., I, 425.

2. Ibid., II, 161.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 286.

4. Ibid., p. 284.

blood for man's sins. In line with this, baptism was "...a sacrament, that is, the sign of an holy thing, even a token of the grace and free mercy which was before given him."¹

However, Frith went further and referred to baptism as "...the fountain of the new birth and regeneration."² If baptism is a sign or token of one's reception into the visible church and, for the elect, into the invisible church, then surely baptism must also be a token of cleansing from sin. The whole idea of a baptismal washing was connected with the common conception of a two fold baptism, the external by water, the internal by the Spirit. In this connection Frith explains his reference to baptism as "...the fountain of the new birth and regeneration":

[Baptism] signifieth that we will indeed renounce and utterly forsake our old life, and purge our members from the works of iniquity through the virtue of the Holy Ghost, which, as the water or fire doth cleanse the body, even so doth it purify the heart from all uncleanness: yea, it is a common phrase in Scripture to call the Holy Ghost water and fire, because these two elements express so lively his purging operation.³

SIGNIFICATION OF BAPTISM

For many years prior to the Reformation the great emphasis on baptism was on its effects rather than on its signification. Even Lombard and Thomas who regarded the signification and effects of baptism as closely

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 286.

2. Ibid., p. 290.

3. Ibid., p. 290.

inter-connected, laid greater stress on the effects. (For example) Cyril of Jerusalem enumerated the spiritual benefits of baptism:

Baptism is a ransom for the captives, the remission of sins, the death of sin, the regeneration of the soul, a bright garment, a holy and indissoluble seal, a carriage to heaven, the enjoyment of paradise, the pledge of the kingdom of heaven, the grace of adoption.¹

The Reformers spoke of the effects of baptism, but they chose to shift the emphasis from the effects to the thing signified. For them, baptism was a significant sign which indicated the thing signified. The meaning was most important, for it was only as the meaning was understood that the sacrament could have its effect.²

The Reformers stressed the connection between baptism and the death and resurrection of Christ. Frith referred to baptism as the sign or token of the inward cleansing which was accomplished through the blood of Christ and performed by the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. These ideas led to the foundational conception of a dying and rising again represented in the baptismal act. With Romans 6 as his starting point, Frith followed the Reformers and found there the most profound and powerful interpretation. On the signification of baptism Frith writes:

The signification of baptism is described of Paul in the sixth of the Romans: that, as we are plunged bodily into the water, even so we are dead and buried

1. Cary, Testimonies of the Fathers, Ant. XXVII.

2. Bromiley, op. cit., p. 16.

with Christ from sin: and as we are lifted again out of the water, even so are we risen with Christ from our sins, that we might hereafter walk in a new conversation of life.¹

In the first instance this symbolism of submersion into the water and emergence to new life, pointed objectively to the death and resurrection of Christ. In this way the act of baptism proclaimed and actualized the main facts of the Gospel, that Christ died for our sins and that He was raised again for our justification. This identification of baptism with the objective work of Christ was not new, for scholars from the Apostle Paul to the 16th century traditionalists taught this. But it was Luther again who led the way by working out with fullness this identification with Christ.²

Frith does not refer to the objective work of Christ as being set forth or pictured in baptism. He, following Luther, was more interested in the picture of our identification with the death and resurrection of Christ than with the objective facts of the death and resurrection of Christ. However, Frith points to this objective work, just as Luther does, for the believer can identify himself with Christ in baptism only because Christ Himself died and rose again. Baptism and the objective work of Christ are inseparable since baptism without the work of Christ is meaningless.

While the implication that baptism proclaims the

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 289.

2. Bromiley, op. cit., p. 22.

objective work of Christ is present in Frith's writings, he seems to lay great stress on the subjective element of identification with Christ. Subjectively then, baptism is a picture of the entry of the believer into the work of Christ. Consequently, Frith interprets Romans 6 in this way: those submerged beneath the baptismal waters represent an identification in faith with the death and burial of Christ; and their emergence means an identification in faith with Christ's resurrection. In baptism the individual pledges to die with Christ from sin and to be raised with Christ to a new life of righteousness.

So that these two things, that is, to be plunged in the water, and lift up again, do signify and represent the whole pith and effect of baptism, that is, the mortification of our old Adam, and the rising up of our new man.¹

Luther was the first Reformer who promulgated the view that, first of all, baptism was a destroying of sin, a drowning of the old man and his sinful works.² Frith adopted this teaching of Luther but he chose not to develop it as Luther did. He merely declares that the old Adam is done away with in baptism. This old Adam is described as "...that by natural inheritance is planted through Adam's fall in us, as to be unfaithful, angry, envious, covetous, slothful, proud, and ungodly."³

If baptism represented a death to sin, it also

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 289.

2. Luther, Works W.E. II, 727.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 289.

represented a rising again. It was the new man, the man of faith, who rose to the new life of righteousness. This new man through faith, "...may daily be more patient, liberal, and merciful..."¹ In short the new man had the potential of resisting temptations and imitating the good works of Christ.

Although in the foregoing sense signification seems subjective, yet it is more than an inward and an individual experience. In stressing the subjective side of repentance, Tyndale said: "Baptism is a sign of repentance signifying that I must repent of evil, and believe to be saved therefrom by the blood of Christ."² But baptismal repentance was also an identification with the objective work of redemption of Christ Himself. "The plunging into the water signifieth that we die, and the pulling out again signifieth that we rise again with Christ into that new life."³ Frith, also, expresses the same idea when he says, "...we are dead and buried with Christ from sin...we [are] risen with Christ from our sins."⁴

Frith was fully conscious of the ethical or saving signification of baptism. He believed that regeneration was accomplished in a point of time, but the working out of this spiritual renewal into daily life necessitated all of life. Luther was not unaware of the ethical

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 290.

2. Tyndale, Works P.S. III, 171.

3. Ibid., I, 253.

4. Frith, op. cit., p. 289.

signification of baptism, as he says:

The whole of this life is a spiritual baptism which continues until death. He who is baptized is pre-determined to death... The spiritual birth and the increase in grace and righteousness begins truly in baptism, but it goes forward until death, and indeed to the last day.¹

In slightly different terms Frith described the ethical signification of baptism similar to the way Luther did.

...A Christian man's life is nothing else save a continual baptism, which is begun when we are dipped in the water, and is put in continual use and exercise as long as the infection of sin remaineth in our bodies, which is never utterly vanquished until the hour of death; and there is the great Goliath slain with his own sword, that is, death, which is the power of sin, and the gate of everlasting life opened unto us.²

Luther not only developed the evangelical and ethical aspect of baptismal signification; but he also drew attention to the eschatological aspect. The process of dying to sin could not be realized completely in this life on earth. Only when death comes is sin finally obliterated. Death itself in this sense, is not the enemy, but the instrument used by God to destroy sin.³ Frith seems to be aware of this eschatological aspect, for he reasons that since sin is always present in life and only vanquished through death, God employs death as His agent of salvation.⁴

EFFICACY OF THE SACRAMENT

The core of the baptismal problem for Frith,

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1. Luther, Works, W.E., II, 728.
 2. Frith, op. cit., p. 290.
 3. Luther, op. cit., W.E., II, 728.
 4. Frith, op. cit., p. 290.

and for many today as well, is the question of efficacy. If baptism is a sign, can it be an efficacious sign? Can the sign give divine grace as well as attest it? If this is possible, is grace given by means of a purely natural or Supernatural operation? Or does God convey grace by means of an operation which is both Supernatural and natural, a work of God and yet a work of man?

The traditionalists of the 16th century answered these questions by affirming the wholly Supernatural operation in baptism. The trend from biblical times and especially through the Ante-Nicene period, was to magnify the connection of grace and sign until regeneration and baptism became almost synonymous terms. The Schoolmen accepted the doctrine that sign and grace necessarily concurred except where insincerity and unbelief were present. However, they were not agreed on how this concurrence was effected. The majority of the Schoolmen and many of the 16th century traditionalists believed that God had given a regenerative force to the water itself; or, in other words, the grace or virtue was inherent in the physical element of water. Henry VIII held this view, for he supposed "That, by the secret Santification of God, life is infused into the corporal element."¹

There was another view which was less materialistic and at the same time it sought to eliminate the element of magic contained in the first view. The proponents

1. Henry VIII, Assertio Septem Sacramentorum, p. 102.

of this theory thought that the external washing by water was always accompanied by an internal washing by the Holy Spirit except where unbelief or insincerity were present. They reasoned that since God had ordained baptism as an external sign, He would accomplish His inward work of grace whenever the outward sign of baptism occurred. Sign and grace, therefore, were still indissolubly united, but the virtue or grace was not found in the element of water, but in the Spirit using and accompanying the water baptism.

Frith rejected both of these theories of automatic efficacy, for he regarded them as causes of the widespread fear that unbaptized infants were eternally lost. With full vigor, therefore, he attacked both theories of automatic efficacy.

Frith attacks the first theory which represents virtue or efficacy as inherent in the element of water with a realistic argument.

For if through the washing in the water, the Spirit or grace were given, then should it follow that whosoever were baptized in water should receive this precious gift; but that is not so, wherefore I must needs conclude that this outward sign, by any power or influence that it hath, bringeth not the Spirit or favour of God.¹

He cites the example of a Jew or infidel, who comes to baptism professing but not really possessing faith. He reasons that if the water itself is efficacious, the Jew or infidel should receive the Spirit. But since a Jew or

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 284.

infidel without faith cannot receive the Holy Spirit, he receives condemnation; his action virtually means a repudiation of the promise of God which is the worst sin.

Frith challenges the second theory of an ex opere operato efficacy on the basis of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit is given whenever water is applied in baptism, then the Holy Spirit is bound to the sacrament.

But this is false, for Cornelius and all his household received the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. Insomuch that Peter said "May any man forbid that these should be baptized with water, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"....Here may we see, that as the Spirit of God lighteth where he will, neither is he bound to any thing.¹

In order to assail successfully the traditional doctrine of an ex opere operato efficacy, the Reformers saw the necessity of distinguishing between the outward baptism of the water and inward baptism of the Spirit. In the 14th century Wycliffe had proposed a separation between the external baptism of water and the inward cleansing of the Holy Spirit, which "...God Himself must do..."² Likewise Tyndale, some years later, made this separation and defined the inward baptism as that which was accomplished "...through repentance toward the law, and faith in Christ's blood; which are the very inward baptism of our souls..."³

Frith also emphasizes the belief that no grace or favor can be given to any one apart from the inward

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 285.

2. Wycliffe, Select English Works, (Arnold, ed.), II, 4.

3. Tyndale, Works P.S. I, 26.

baptism. By this "...inward baptism (which is the water of life and Spirit of God,) we have indeed put him [Christ] upon us and live in him, and he in us..."¹ The inward baptism of regeneration must be experienced before the outward baptism can have real meaning. In this sense sins are remitted not through water baptism but "...through the blood and passion of Christ, according unto the promise of God... Thus through Christ's blood whereof our baptism hath his full strength and vigour, are we regenerate and made at one with the Father..."²

The efficacy of the inward baptism is better understood when we note Frith's views concerning the relationship between circumcision and election. Circumcision was a token or memorial of God's election of the Hebrew people as peculiarly belonging to Him. The error in Hebrew thinking, according to Frith, was to assume that all people not circumcised could not possibly be the elect of God. History shows that there were men, for example Job, who were not circumcised; nevertheless they were among the elect of God because they possessed the spiritual circumcision which was the decisive factor in the eyes of God. Frith continues the argument:

And in like manner may we say of our baptism, he is not a Christian man which is washed with water, neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh; but that is the very baptism which God alloweth, to be baptized spiritually in the heart, that is, to subdue and weed out the branches of sin, that it

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 448,449.

2. Ibid., p. 291.

reign not in your mortal bodies, and bring them into bondage under it; of the which our baptism is but a sign. And there are many, I doubt not, which are thus spiritually baptized, although their bodies touch not water, as there were Gentiles thus spiritually circumcised, and yet never cut off the foreskin of their privy members.¹

So far does Frith magnify the inward baptism of the Holy Spirit, that he seems to minimize the efficacy of the outward baptism. Lest anyone should conclude that the outward baptism is unnecessary, Frith insists that "...although it seem never so exterior a thing, yet ought it to be had in great price and much reverence, because it was commanded of God to be done."² In stressing the spiritual baptism, he does not deny efficacy to baptism but he denies that the external baptism imparts grace as a substance³ or some secret virtue.

The clue in determining Frith's trend of thought with regard to the efficacy in baptism may be found in the writings of Luther who dominated the first period of the English Reformation. While, however, Luther expressed

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 287.

2. Ibid., p. 291.

3. "Under the influence of the Stoic philosophy of 'substance' the grace of the Gospel in medieval Christendom was not so much the personal attitude of God in Christ to sinners, as a quasi-material 'stuff' dispensed through the sacramental praxis of the Church in all its growing elaboration and vanity. It was a supernatural medicine,...a kind of heavenly 'vitamin' or energy-giving 'virtue', infused into the soul through the sacraments; notably the sacraments of baptism and penance; and through sacramentalia in various forms. Indeed, it was formally defined as gratia infusa, infused grace; a divinely communicated quality or 'habit' of the soul." Whale, The Protestant Tradition, p. 49.

himself in a manner which suggested an ex opere operato¹ efficacy, he broke decisively with the traditional doctrine. He insisted that the true work of baptism is a work of faith and promise, not of the outward act. Parallel to this, Luther emphasized the fact that faith is indispensable to the operation of baptism;² indeed, faith is the response of the soul which enables baptism to have its effect. Regeneration is a personal matter in which the divine promise is held out on the one hand, and faith is the appropriation and fulfillment of the promise on the other. Consequently, Luther regarded the power of baptism to lie in the baptismal word which declares, promises and gives to the external sign its true signification. Baptism, then, was efficacious only as the word of baptism was perceived,

1. Luther used expressions which suggested an ex opere operato efficacy (i.e. simply through the objective performance of the rite) because he emphasized the objective nature of the divine grace and work. God's power, therefore, according to Luther, dwells in the sacrament in virtue of the Lord's institution and promise. Kostlin, The Theology of Luther, II, 507.
2. That is not to say that baptism depends on the recipient's faith. As Kostlin observes, "Faith must, it is true, be exercised in baptism, but no one is to be baptized on (the ground of) his faith. It is one thing to have faith, and quite another thing to depend upon one's faith, and thus be baptized upon it. It is, much rather, the firm ground of our baptism, that God has made a covenant and instituted baptism as its sign. We receive baptism, therefore, not because we are sure that we possess faith, but because He desires us to receive it. He who is baptized upon (the ground of) his faith, builds upon something which is his own, and not upon God's Word alone." Kostlin, Op. cit., II, 55.

understood and followed by the response of faith. The efficacy of the sacrament depended upon the free and sovereign Spirit of God who disposes of both word and sacrament.¹ Bromiley summarizes succinctly Luther's position:

The work of baptism was not done through the water alone, nor was it done through the Spirit necessarily acting with the water. If it was done at all, it was done only in so far as the Spirit Himself worked in, with and under the water, and sign and grace came together in the one creative act by which faith is born and the soul received by promise.²

Lutheran ideas regarding baptism were adopted by most of the early English Reformers. The unknown author of the Summe of Holy Scripture found no more virtue in the fountain than in the Rhine River. Thus one of numerous criticisms of the above mentioned work according to the traditionalists was this: "The baptisme lyeth not in halowed water, or in other outward thinge, but in the faith only."³ Along Lutheran lines also, Tyndale believed that the Holy Spirit "...accompanieth the preaching of faith, and with the word of faith, entereth the heart and purgeth it."⁴

Frith also emphasized faith as the prerequisite to baptism and as the means of receiving the full efficacy of baptism. This faith was the response of the soul to

1. Bromiley, op. cit., p. 187.

2. Ibid., p. 187.

3. Wilkins, Concilia III, 730.

4. Tyndale, Works P.S. I, 423-4.

God's promise which made the inward baptism possible.

Therefore quite frankly, Frith says:

...if thou be baptized a thousand times with water, and have no faith, it availeth thee no more towards God, than it doth a goose when she duketh herself under the water. Therefore, if thou wilt obtain the profit of baptism, thou must have faith, that is, thou must be surely persuaded that thou art newly born again, not by water only, but by water and the Holy Ghost, and thou art become the child of God, and that thy sins are not imputed to thee, but forgiven through the blood and passion of Christ, according unto the promise of God.¹

The efficacy in baptism, therefore, must be a result of the divine work of the Holy Spirit who accomplishes the work of baptism in, with, and under the water. Sign and grace are brought together, but not in an ex opere operato manner as the traditionalists thought.

In connection with efficacy, one searches Frith's writings in vain for a clear statement defining the grace imparted in baptism. Although he denies the possibility of an impartation of grace, it is the medieval idea of a spiritual substance or energy which he opposes. From a careful reading of Frith's treatise, one is able to pierce through the armour of polemics by which Frith insists upon the absence of baptismal grace, to certain thoughts which seem to indicate the acceptance of the Reformed view. This view is basically the concept that baptism is a means of grace just as the Bible, prayer and preaching of the Word are. This is why Frith claims a benefit in baptism. And if we look for the definition of this grace, we may look

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 290-291.

to Calvin who gathered up all the loose strands from the early Reformers and declared that the grace offered in baptism is Christ Himself.¹

INFANT BAPTISM

It is unfortunate that Frith did not develop the doctrine of infant baptism more fully, but he presents the Reformed doctrine in skeletal form. The first argument in support of infant baptism was taken from the Old Testament analogy of circumcision. Luther was aware of this argument, but it was Zwingli who worked it out in considerable detail. He reasoned that the children of Christians belonged to the people of God no less than the children of the Israelites. The latter received circumcision as a token of their inclusion into the covenant of God. In like manner children of Christians were entitled to the same covenantal relationship and consequently they had the right to baptism as the sign of this relationship.²

Frith followed Zwingli in stressing the analogy of circumcision to baptism.

If an infant be brought unto baptism, whom his friends offer up willing to sanctify and fulfill the commandment and ordinance of God, we inquire of his friends, before the congregation, whether they will that their child be baptized, and when they have answered yea, then receiveth he baptism. Here also went before the promise of God, that he of his grace reputeth our infants of the Hebrews; and through baptism doth the congregation receive him, which was first received through grace of the promise.³

Children of Christian parents were worthy subjects of

1. Calvin, Institutes, II, 502.

2. Hinke (ed.) The Latin Works of Huldreich Zwingli, II, 195.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 286.

baptism because of being children of promise; consequently they were entitled to the sign of baptism before being received into the visible congregation of Christ.

The second argument in defense of infant baptism was connected with the analogy of circumcision, but also in a sense it was the real support of the covenantal argument. This was the argument based upon the election of God. Zwingli was again the forerunner in stressing election in this connection. He rejected the Anabaptist insistence that faith was the ground of adoption into the family of God. Election, Zwingli countered, was the ground and basis; for the elect man was the son of God even before he came to faith.¹ Frith also believed that since God chose the Israelites from among all the nations and gave circumcision to them as a token or memorial of this election, God ordained baptism as a token or memorial of the Christian's election.

Neither is it to be esteemed, but that God is as merciful unto us, which are of the spiritual Israel, as he was unto the carnal Israel. St. John, St. Paul and such other, were they not being infants of the congregation of God, elect in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world? howbeit, in their infancy they neither had faith, nor yet knew any thing of this election.²

Frith does not argue that all infants Born of Christian parents were the elect of God. But he believes that all are to be considered as elect, and consequently the sign of baptism belonged to them. "...our judgment

1. Hinke, op. cit., II, 199-200.

2. Frith, op. cit., p. 288.

recounteth all faithful and chosen that seem to be..."¹
 Baptism also indicated that they belonged to the visible congregation of God. That was not to say that children received baptism as a token of their entrance into the invisible, spotless church of God, for then no infant could be allowed baptism since faith and good works were the only indications of this election.

...our baptism doth not testify that we are of that pure congregation which was chosen and sanctified in Christ before the world began, which have their names written in the book of life, of the which it is not possible that one should perish; for then were it a false testimony, seeing many which are baptized, fall afterward into perilous heresies, and utter desperation, which bringeth them unto death everlasting.²

Because of his understanding of election, Frith rejects the Anabaptist insistence upon faith saying:

And as for faith, if they have none when they are baptized, let them pray unto God to give it them afterward; for the lack of faith hurteth not the sacrament, but the sacrament may be as well ministered unto a miscreant as to a faithful, if he say that he hath faith, or have any promise of God.³

Another argument in support of infant baptism was found in Luke 18 where Jesus invites little children to come unto Him. Evidently the Anabaptist exegesis of this passage had little influence on Frith, for he confidently quotes the passage as final proof for infant baptism without recognizing the problems involved in its interpretation.

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 288.

2. Ibid., p. 289.

3. Ibid., p. 289.

One of the main problems connected with infant baptism was that of the absolute necessity of the sacrament for salvation. The traditionalists of the 16th century inherited the teachings of a rigid necessity from the medieval scholars, Lombard and Thomas, who claimed that water baptism was necessary for salvation except when a martyr's death or a special work of the Holy Spirit were substituted.¹ The Council of Trent approved and codified the medieval teachings and among other things declared baptism absolutely necessary to salvation.² As representative of the English traditionalist view, the Ten Articles of 1536 state "...infants and children dying in their infancy shall undoubtedly be saved thereby [i.e. by baptism], and else not."³

The rigid teaching of the medieval scholars did not enjoy freedom from attack. In England Wycliffe attacked the medieval view and declared that the prevailing teaching was too harsh. In the case of those children whose parents fully intended baptism, but through no fault of their own were not baptized, Wycliffe felt that they would be saved through "...the merciful liberality of Christ."⁴ In referring to infants in general, Wycliffe was not willing to declare openly whether infants without baptism were saved or damned. He pleaded ignorance and declared if God

1. Bromiley, op. cit., p. 48.

2. Waterworth, Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent, p. 56.

3. Hardwick, History of the Articles of Religion, p. 236.

4. Wall, The History of Infant Baptism, II, 113-114.

wanted to save them He would, and if He wanted to condemn them, He could.¹ Since Wycliffe believed in a three fold baptism,² he did not agree that infants not baptized were lost; for he adds, "I think it probable, that Christ might without any such washing, spiritually baptize, and by consequence save infants."³

Although the medieval party sought to suppress Wycliffe's views, they were not successful in obliterating them. His views on baptismal necessity were constantly reappearing in protest to the traditional doctrine. It was in this succession that Tyndale and Frith raised their voices in protest. Frith believed in the necessity of a command to baptize, but he rejected the conception of an absolute necessity of baptism if an infant were to be saved. Consequently he devoted more than half of his treatise to an attack on the absolute necessity. In doing so, Frith did not follow Luther ^{who} was vague and even leaned towards the doctrine of absolute necessity as is evidenced by his allowance that even laymen could baptize new born babies if either the minister was not there, or if the baby was in danger.⁴

1. Wycliffe, Triialogus, p. 160.

2. "...ther ben three baptisingis: the firste...in water, the tother...with blood, but the thridde baptising, moost needeful and moost worth, is purging of the Hooli Goost."

Arnold (ed.), Select English Works, II, 4.

3. Wycliffe, Triialogus, p. 159.

4. Wall, op. cit., II, 118.

Frith attacked the traditionalist's doctrine of absolute necessity along the line of exposing the ex opere operato theory of baptism as invalid and contrary to the Scriptures. This criticism has already been dealt with when we discussed the efficacy of baptism. If the ex opere operato theory was false, and Frith believed it was, then infants who were not baptized were not to be condemned since the water imparts no grace.

On a more positive note Frith attacks the traditionalist necessity with the doctrine of election. This development, no doubt, came from Zwingli who believed that Christian children were members of the covenant through divine election. Baptism was merely the sign of this election, and therefore, if the sign was lacking, the fact of membership in the covenant still remained. This conception of election blended itself with the concept of a two fold baptism which Frith advocated. In this way the elect received the baptism of the Spirit and were saved without water baptism. Convinced of this, Frith writes:

...he is sore to blame, that so unadvisedly condemneth these infants, judging his brother which is in God's hand, yea and peradventure baptized in Christ's blood, for God's election is unknown to man.¹

Since this election is hid from man's eyes, no one can condemn an infant although he be not baptized in water.

It is strange that Frith does not discuss original sin and its relationship to baptismal necessity in his treatise. The main contention of the medieval school was

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 292.

that baptism should be administered to remove the guilt of original sin. In this respect there are only two alternatives to take. Either he must admit with some of the Anabaptists that there is no original sin, or he must accept the concept of original sin and proceed to substitute for water baptism some other means of remitting it. The first alternative Frith rejects, for although he says nothing of original sin in the treatise on baptism, he nevertheless mentions it in his treatise entitled "An Epistle to the Christian Reader".

Thou must keep therefore an order in thy justification, first considering what the law requireth on thee, which truly bindeth thee now to as much as though thou were in the state of innocency and commandeth thee to be without concupiscence, which is original sin.¹

It was Frith's belief that original sin was remitted in the case of infants by the universal merit of the blood of Christ. This idea, as Schaff states, first originated with Zwingli and Bullinger,² and it was adopted by Frith.³

THE RITE OF BAPTISM

The Reformers and the 16th century traditionalists agreed that repentance and personal faith were the basic prerequisites for those who reached the age of accountability. Frith did not deviate from this view as he states:

...when we baptize one that is come unto the age of

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 461.

2. Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, p. 642; Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 207.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 461.

discretion, we ask of him whether he believe? if he answer yea, and desire baptism, then is he baptized; so that we require faith in him before he is baptized.¹

In the case of infants, faith as a public confession could not be postulated. The Anabaptists, therefore, seized upon this idea and they insisted upon refraining from infant baptism. In rejecting the Anabaptist insistence, the Reformers countered with the idea that in some way the prerequisite of faith, ⁱⁿ the case of infants was met by the child's sponsors or godparents. Luther accepted this but went further by his claim that infants have faith.² Although it is difficult to determine what Luther meant by infants' faith, we may note that at one time he spoke of it as the absence of a hostile disposition, and later as an inpoured gift.³ Frith followed Luther here, for although he did not define faith with regard to infants, he made the following remark:

...when a man answereth that the infant believeth which hath not the effect of faith, he answereth that it hath faith for the Sacrament of faith; and that it turneth itself to God for the sacrament of conversion: for the answer itself pertaineth unto the ministering of the Sacrament.⁴

If Frith followed Luther with respect to infants' faith, he did not follow through with the Lutheran result which made the godparents merely the mouthpieces of the

1. Frith, op. cit., pp. 285-286.

2. Luther, Works, (Holman Co.) P. 236.

3. Ibid., p. 237.

4. Frith, op. cit., pp. 365-366.

infants. Rather, the godparents, according to Frith, pledged the future repentance and faith of the infant by submitting their own faith, as it were, as a guarantee. This Reformed conception is corroborated in the following remarks:

And as concerning godfathers and godmothers, they promise for their godchildren that they shall mortify the root of sin which springeth in their bodies, and subdue their lusts under the law of God. They promise also that they will instruct and bring up their godchildren in the faith of Christ.¹

Before Calvin, Knox and the Elizabethan Puritans came on the scene, Frith championed their desire that parents be either the godparents or at least one of them as chief godparent. Frith writes:

...the office [of godparents] pertaineth unto their parents, for they are commanded of God to teach their children; so that the parent should be either alone, or at least the chiefest godfathers.²

Frith concludes with a castigation aimed at those who withhold the means whereby parents may teach their children and fulfill their responsibility as sponsors. "They keep the Scriptures and word of God from you, and bear you in hand that it is heresy."³ These words are reminiscent of those spoken by Tyndale who bitterly attacked Archbishop Warham for not allowing the translated Bible in England.

Frith was less critical of the ceremonies connected with the rite of baptism. Although ceremonies may

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 295.

2. Ibid., p. 295.

3. Ibid., p. 296.

have been means of edification to the weak and immature members of the church, they were not to be regarded as necessary in order for baptism to be effective. This general attitude was Lutheran in origin for Luther expressed himself in much the same way in his Treatise on Christian Liberty.¹ Zwingli retained the oil, spittle, exorcism, crossing, anointing and the chrism of the ceremony, but after a firm establishment of the Reformation he proceeded in agreement with the Anabaptists, who desired the discontinuation of all ceremonies which had no sanction in the New Testament.²

Ceremonies, according to Frith, were to be classed in the category of indifferent things except in the case of those who regarded them as essential to salvation. "For I think them not needful unto our salvation. Them ought we to resist in the face, and not yield an inch unto them."³ That too much importance had been attached to ceremonies was evident to Frith who compared the apostolic practice with that of his day:

The ceremonies of baptism are easily expressed, if thou know what the substance of it is, and how the apostles ministered it; and where may we have that better expressed than Acts viii, viz. where Philip baptized the Eunuch, chamberlain to the Queen of Candace? This Eunuch did acknowledge that Jesus was the son of God, which is the sign of our faith, and desired baptism; and Philip, at the next water they came to, washed him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There will no man deny but

1. Luther, Works, (Holman Co.) p. 348.

2. Bromiley, op. cit., p. 149.

3. Frith, op. cit., p. 293.

that that baptism was as full and as good as ours; and yet was there neither font nor holy water, candle, cream, oil, salt, godfather, or godmothers, or any other popery. Wherefore we may conclude, that all these things are but ceremonies, that is to say, exterior things, which make baptism neither the better nor worse of a mite.¹

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 293.

PART III

THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN FRITH
ON THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

CHAPTER IX

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE

CHAPTER IX

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE

The ordeal by fire ended the life of Frith, but it had the reverse effect in regard to his influence. If he was little known before that lamentable event, his name afterwards became a byword not only in London but throughout England. The reason for this was clearly stated by Becon.

When the enemies of God burn good men, and consume their books unto ashes, then are these martyrs the better credited, their doctrine the more regarded, and their books both the more warely kept, and held in greater reverence.¹

RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

Frith's works were the main channel of his influence. Few books were so avidly read by an ever growing constituency of readers, and few were found in out-of-the-way places as Frith's. More was correct when he said that no house was too small to hide several books of the Reformers.²

Two examples of Frith's influence may be cited here. The first is recorded by Strype in connection with one John Loud. Loud had been a tutor to Mr. Richard Southand, a Privy Counsellor to King Henry, King Edward, and Queen May^R. He was educated at Winchester and Benet College and later he went to the Inns of Court where he tutored Southwell. He was suspected of holding evangelical

1. Becon, Works P.S., II, 421.

2. More, Works, p. 1036.

opinions and narrowly escaped arrest. At the burning of Anne Ascue he said in the presence of all, "I ask vengeance of you all that do thus burn a member of Christ."¹

How was it that Loud first became interested in Protestantism? Strype tells us that ^hwhile Loud was a scholar at Winchester, Thomas Harding (who was afterwards chaplain to Grey, Marquess of Dorset) gave him Frith's book on purgatory to peruse for two days. In the words of Strype:

But liking it so well, he begged his leave to keep it for 3 and 20.²

Thus it was that the book of Frith's making influenced Loud to espouse Protestantism.

The second example of Frith's influence is contained in a letter written by William Maldon to John Foxe. Maldon was first interested in evangelical doctrines when Henry VIII authorized the reading of the English Bible in the churches. Certain "poore men" bought a New Testament and in one corner of the church in Chelmsford, Essex they began to hold Bible reading sessions. Maldon tells us;

Then I came among the sayd reders, to here thier redyng of that glad and sweet tydyngs of the gospels. Then my father seying this, that I lystened unto them everie sundaye, then cam he and sought me amonge them, and brought me awaye from the hering of them, and wolde have me to say the Lattin mattyns with hym, the which greved me very much... Then I see I could not be in reste. Then thought I, I will learne to rede Englyshe, and then will I have the Newe Testament and rede ther on myself: and than had I learned of an English prymer as far as Patris sapientia, and

1. Strype, Memorials, I, 596.

2. Ibid., I, 597.

then on sundays I plyed my Engelysh prymer. Shortly thereafter Maldon bought an English New Testament and "hydde it in our bed strawe, and so exercised it at convenient times." He soon became a zealous believer in evangelical doctrines and began studying Frith's book on the Sacrament.¹

There is evidence that these two were among many more who read Frith's books. When in 1536 a visitation was held in Lincoln, among the books burned were copies of Tyndale's New Testament and a book of Frith's.² This shows that the evangelical faith was penetrating this stronghold of conservatism.

By 1542 the works of Frith, nine years after his death, were still in demand. Roderigo Mors printed his Lamentacion of a Christian against the citie of London in 1542 and begged that some printer be bold enough to reprint Frith's work on the Sacrament.

As touching this matter, John Frith, the servant of the Lord, whom ye and your false prophets have burned, whose blood with others cries vengeance against your bishops, he I say hath written invincibly in this matter whose work I exhort all those which favor the free passage of the Gospel unfaynedly to reade and to studye. For it is agreyng unto the touchestoane of Gods worde, and to the old aunceyent doctoures as appeareth by the same boke of his. And I exhort you in God's name if ther be any Christen prynter in London to prynt mor of that work, for there kan never be to many of them. Feare not man although deeth so lowe, seyng Christ saith, He that loseth his lyfe for my wordes sake shall save it.³

1. Nichols, Narratives of the Days of the Reformation, pp. 348-351.

2. Dodds, The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-1537, I, 93.

3. Mors, The Lamentacion of a Christian, pp. 39-40. (Mors is a pseudonym for Henry Brinklow.)

The above reference to Frith's work on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper partially explains the appearance of other editions which came out at this time. It was the most popular of Frith's writings and seems to have gone through at least four editions. It was first printed in 1533 by Conrad Williams of Monster. In 1546 an anonymous printer printed an edition of which several ^{COPIES} are still extant. In 1548 two printers published the work, Richard Jugye and, jointly, A. Scoloker and W. Seres.

But what of the other works? Nothing has survived of any subsequent editions of the work on purgatory originally printed in 1531. It circulated far and wide and must have been reprinted several times, although this would be difficult to prove. For instance, Becon noted that in Derbyshire among other current books, "The book of John Frith against Purgatory" was eagerly read.¹ It hardly seems likely that no printer printed any more of this work. We do know, however, that Frith's work on baptism, originally published in 1533, was republished at least two times. John Day published it first in 1550 and again in 1554.² Although a smaller work and somewhat inferior to the works on purgatory and Lord's Supper, it did much to clarify the evangelical position on baptism. All of the above works together with the minor works of Frith mentioned in previous chapters were for the first

1. Becon, op. cit., P.S. II, 421.

2. Maunsell, The First Part of the Catalogue of English Printed Books, p. 93.

time collected and printed in Foxe's Works of Tyndale, Frith and Barnes and published in 1573.

Measuring the impact of Frith's books on the public is one way of assessing his influence. Another equally profitable method would be to consider the controversies which continued for years after his death.

The traditionalists became furious with the success of the evangelicals. And when Sir Thomas More laid down his mantle, only inferior controversialists picked it up. One of these was Gwynnethe, an Irish Catholic who took upon himself to refute Frith three years after his death. He wrote three treatises,¹ copies of which are extant today, in which he purposed to demonstrate in dialogue form, how ridiculous and heretical Frith was. His arguments are weak and better would it have been for the traditionalists if Gwynnethe never would have written. For what he did write only helped to focus attention on Frith and give him wider publicity. Gwynnethe, however, reveals the fact that Frith's influence was being felt in more than local areas. In 1554 Gwynnethe confessed that he little realized in 1536

1. In 1536 appeared the "Confutation." It seems that Gwynnethe was ill for several years. This prevented him from publishing a fuller attack until 1554 when he had printed "A Manifeste Detection of the notable falshed of that part of John Frithe's booke, which he calleth his foundation, and bosteth it to be invincible". The third treatise appeared in the same year entitled: "A Declaracion of the State, wherein all heretikes dooe leade their lives; and also of their continuall indever, and prope fruictes, which beginneth in the 33 chapter, and so to thende of the woorke."

that the venion of Frithes booke wolde have spredde
so farre abrode, as the lamentable experience therof
doth presently declare...1

Twenty-one years after Frith's ordeal at the stake, Gwynnethe
informs us that there were still many disciples of Frith.

Therefore now let us see the depe learnyng of this
wise man, whereby he hath drawn so many disciples
after hym, as he hath done...2

That Frith remained one of the most controversial
figures from the thirties to the fifties, is born out by
Frith's contemporary, John Bale in 1542. Pantabolus (John
Huntington) wrote an attack on the evangelicals in which
he singled out men such as Luther, Tyndale and Frith, for
the purpose of castigating their characters. For instance,
a popular ditty among the traditionalists was:

The first captayne
of this false trayne
Was one Johan Frith/
Which had no pyth
of learnynge nor wytt
Not worth a nytt. 3

While the traditionalists repeated this emotional ditty,
Bale pointed to some solid facts. Commenting on Frith's
wit, Bale observes,

Where as the contrarye is knowne to his whole gener-
acyn / which never were yet able to confute his boke
of purgatory agenst Rastell/ More/ and Rochestre/
besydes his other workes.4

But the real cause of disliking Frith was his

1. Gwynnethe, A Declaracion of the State..., preface.
2. Gwynnethe, A Manifesto Detection..., p. 4.
3. Bale, A Mysterye of inyquyte..., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 31.

attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation.

He dyd saye playne
There did not remayne
Ryallye present
in the blessed sacrament.¹

And as Bale observes it was the popular acceptance of Frith's work on the Sacrament that alarmed the traditionalists.

That is the cumberouse collyck that pangeth him and his generacym daylye at the very hart rote/ and thar maketh them so melancholye/ madde/ and modye agaynst heretyques. They are not contented that Johan Frith was so playne in his Wrytynges concernynge that matter/ wherein all their commodyte and profygntes byeth enclosed. Had he medled with anye other thynges els/ he had not so sore displeased them. For yf that ones were taken awaye, small substance wold remayne unto them/ towards their spiritual mayntenance...²

A year later (1543) William Turner entered the controversy by printing The Huntynge and Fyndynge out of the Romish Fox. The thesis of this diatribe against the traditionalists was that although the Pope was banished from the realm, yet his doctrine remained. Turner cites the case of Frith and continues:

It is plain than that ye hold still the Pope's Canon Law, and, though ye have banished his name for a face, that ye hold still his books and his ceremonies. Then answer me to a question: - Are there not many things in John Frith's books that are both good and godly and agreeing with the Word of God? And then tell me, why ye have condemned all his books for heresy, and the readers of them, and havers of them, for heretics, for not more than two or three heresies, even after your judgment, seeing there are so many other godly things that are no heresy. If ye say, though there be many good things in his books; what need Christian men to seek good things out of a heretics book, seeing there are

1. Bale, op. cit., p. 32.

2. Ibid., p. 33.

books enow beside; and therefore we burn the heretics' books with the heretics, lest the heresy that the heretics taught, should spread by the means of the books. For as the voice of a heretic heard, maketh heretics, so the books of a heretic read, maketh heretics, and therefore we burn the one with the other.¹

Five years later Frith's name reappears in the writings of the Frenchman, John Veron. In Certayne Litel Treaties Veron refers to Frith in terms which reveal his dependence on Frith's works. The last page of the above work closes thus:

If any man is not yet satisfied in his conscience touching the matter of the sacrament let him read the litel treatise, which John Frith hath written against the deuclish poetrie of Thomas More, and I trust, that he wyl be in this behalfe wel satisfied, remembre in meane season Christen reader, that as the soule is a spirite, so it thirsteth, and hungereth for spiritual food, and not for bodeli and corporal.²

It is plain then that Frith exercised an undeniable influence on the religious life of the English people, especially during the two decades after his death. Hooper,³ Bradford,⁴ and others openly expressed their views that Frith was unjustly put to death and so attest the popularity and influence of John Frith.

THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

What influence, if any, was brought about by Frith on the thinking and more precisely, on the doctrinal formulation of the Church of England? It is certain

1. Turner, The Huntynge and Fyndynge out of the Romish Fox. p. 18.
2. Veron, Certayne Litel Treaties, (last page).
3. Hooper, Works P.S. I, 376.
4. Bradford, Works P.S. I, 283.

that some influence was brought to bear on the theologians as well as the ordinary people.

Cranmer had much to do with the trial of Frith, and one wonders how much Frith's views influenced him in his gradual conversion to Protestantism. The Ten Articles of 1536 which Cranmer helped to formulate reveal that already there was uncertainty regarding the doctrine of purgatory. Article ten states that prayers for the dead were to be continued according to tradition.

But forasmuch as the place where they [the dead] be, the name thereof, and kind of pains there, also be to us uncertain by Scripture; therefore this with all other things we remit to God Almighty, unto whose mercy it is meet and convenient for us to commend them...1

No longer was the doctrine of purgatory to be believed as necessary to salvation. The preface states that:

...the said Articles [are] to be divided into two sorts, that is to say, such as are commanded expressly by God, and are necessary to our Salvation, and such other, as although they be not expressly commanded of God, nor necessary to our salvation; yet being of a long continuance for a decent order and honest policy, prudently instituted, are for that same purpose and end to be observed in like manner.2

Yet just three years before, John Frith on the eve of his death had penned the articles for which he died: "I count it for no necessary article of our faith necessarily to be ^{believed} under pain of damnation whether there be such a purgatory or not."

Seven years later Cranmer assisted in the pub-

1. Burnet, History of the Reformation of the Church of England, I, pt. II, 470-471.
2. Ibid., I, pt. II, 458.

lication of the Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man (the King's book, 1543). The article "Prayers for souls departed" declared that it is now necessary "that we should therefore abstain from the name of Purgatory and no more dispute or reason thereof".¹

In 1552 with Cranmer as the leading figure, Convocation passed the Forty-two Articles. Article 23 on purgatory states:

The Doctrine of the School-men concerning purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping, and adoration, as well of images as of Reliques, and also Invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather perniciously repugnant to the Word of God.²

With only a minor alteration this article remains in the Thirty-nine Articles of today, a memorial to John Frith who first wrote on the subject just prior to the Reformation.

More decisive and clear was his influence on the sacramental doctrine. At the time of Frith's death, Cranmer and Ridley held the traditionalist doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Cranmer had dismissed Frith's arguments on the spiritual presence when Frith reasoned with him at Croydon in June 1533. But Cranmer never could obliterate these views from his mind. Later he adopted Frith's views and met the same death as Frith for holding identically the same doctrine.

How did this come about? In 1545 Ridley -

1. Lloyd, Formularies, p. 376.

2. Burnet, op. cit., II, pt. II, 298-299.

...spent a great part of this year in retirement at his vicarage of Herne, whither he carried with him such strong impressions of the sufferings and arguments of the more serious sacramentaries, as prevailed on him to give their cause a more patient examination.¹

Although Glouster Ridley does not mention who among the sacramentarians bore influence on Ridley, it is too much to believe that the one-time Cambridge student, John Frith, was passed over lightly. In fact, who of the sacramentarians holding the doctrine of Christ's spiritual presence in the Sacrament was exerting the most influence on the common people and theological thinkers if not Frith through his treatise on that subject?

During 1545 Ridley studied Ratramnus' treatise on the Lord's Supper originally published in the 9th century, and republished at Cologne in 1532. After diligent study of the treatise Ridley was convinced of the spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper and entirely rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation.

This Bertram was the first that pulled me by the ear, and that first brought me from the common error of the Romish Church, and caused me to search more diligently and exactly both the scriptures and the writings of the old ecclesiastical Fathers in this matter.²

It was this same treatise of Ratramnus published in Cologne which Frith used as the basis for his treatise in 1533.

Could it be that Ridley was influenced by Frith's treatise to pursue for himself the study of Ratramnus? There is no proof for or against this, but the important aspect of

1. Ridley, G., The Life of Dr. Nicholas Ridley, pp. 162-3.

2. Ibid., p. 170.

the discussion lies in the fact that Cranmer was first brought away from transubstantiation by Ridley.

A few historians have contended that Cranmer was directly influenced by Frith. Thus Foxe charged that Cranmer borrowed Frith's work without giving him any credit. Burnet goes as far as to say that:

...a copy of it [Frith's treatise on the Lord's Supper] was brought afterwards to Cranmer, who acknowledged, when he wrote his apology against Gardiner, that he had received great light in that matter from Frith's book, and drew most of his arguments out of it.¹

Strype, on the other hand, vigorously denied Cranmer's dependence on Frith by claiming Cranmer's broad study of the Scriptures and Fathers as the source of his doctrine. It is true that Cranmer was a scholar and was familiar with the Fathers as few were in those days. But the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes. Cranmer could not have ignored Frith's work, but he may have found it provocative reading and an incentive to study further the doctrine of Lord's Supper.

From the accounts of Foxe and Bale it seems very likely that Lambert (alias William Nicholson) adopted the views of Frith on the Sacrament. Both accounts however, end abruptly after the arguments against transubstantiation are given. Why this is the case may not be Foxe's or Bale's fault. Perhaps the copies they recorded were incomplete. Some light, however, is shed on the mystery from

1. Burnet, op. cit., I, pt.I, 307.

I have been unable to verify this citation in the works of Cranmer. Perhaps Burnet had access to an early edition which is no longer extant.

Wriothsesley's Chronicles of ^{England} London.¹ Of the five accusations brought against Lambert at his trial, one was the charge: "Christus non assumpsit carnem ex Virgine Maria". This has always been the tag by which Anabaptists of Dutch origin were known. It seems that the writer of the copies which Bale and Foxe had in their possession took the liberty to quote Lambert's arguments against transubstantiation, but when it came to the Anabaptist view of the Lord's Supper, he felt it was better to exclude that portion. The fact remains, however, that Frith's arguments against transubstantiation were adopted by Lambert.

It is undeniable that the theological formulations of the period of the Reformation bear some relation to Frith's doctrine. The Forty-two Articles of 1552 taught the same doctrine which is found in Frith's treatise.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith.

The very words which Frith used in his arguments on the Lord's Supper were incorporated in the Prayer Book.

...And as concernynge the naturall bodye and bloud of our saviour Christe, they are in heaven and not here. For it is agaynst the truth of Christes true natural bodye, to be in moe places then in one, at one tyme.²

1. Wriothsesley, Chronicles, pp. 88-89.

2. The booke of Common Prayer of the Church of England: its making and revisions Ratcliff, E., p. 8a.

Foxe, op. cit., V, 6.

"It is affecting to know that Frith's writings were the instruments of Cranmer's conversion; and the fathers of the Anglican Church have left a monument of their sorrow for the shedding of this innocent blood in the order of the Communion Service, which closes with the very words on which the primate, with his brother bishops, had sat in judgment." Froude, op. cit., V, 479.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

It is true that Frith had strong convictions regarding his Protestant beliefs. He defended the doctrine of the spiritual presence with unshaken confidence. Nor would he concede a doctrine of purgatory. But what is unusual for this period is the fact that he wished both sides, Protestant and Romanist, to grant freedom in accepting both doctrines. Thus the articles drawn up just before he was burned contain the following:

Frith thinketh and judgeth, that there is no purgatory for the soul, after that it is departed from the body; and he thinketh herein, so hath he said, written, and defended: howbeit he thinketh neither part to be an article of faith, necessarily to be believed under pain of damnation...

Frith thinketh and judgeth, that the natural body of Christ is not in the sacrament of the altar, but in one place only at once. He saith, that neither part is a necessary article of our faith, whether the natural body be there in the sacrament, or not.¹

It was not only freedom for himself and his convictions that he wanted, but he was willing to grant freedom for others to continue believing the traditional doctrines. But he went further, he was willing to die for the theory of toleration. Thus Innes wrote:

Frith was the first and almost the only martyr (July, 1533) to the theory of toleration, to which neither Romanists nor Protestants, Anglicans nor Zwinglians, were yet ready to give ear.²

How much the writings and martyrdom of Frith influenced the English peoples in attaining religious

1. Foxe, op. cit., V, appendix 22. (Pratt's edition)
2. Innes, England Under the Tudors, pp. 144, 145.

toleration and finally freedom, is not easily ascertained. It is certain, however, that his martyrdom prepared the soil from which sprung the first shoots of toleration. It is unfortunate that histories of toleration have paid no attention to Frith's view. Jordan,¹ for instance, in his excellent treatment of religious toleration in England does not even mention Frith's name. One would think that in his discussion of "early evidences of tolerant thought: 1530-1558", he would refer to Frith, but one searches the pages in vain.

TUDOR PURITANISM

Puritanism was commonly thought to have originated in England when the Marian exiles returned from the Continent bringing with them Calvinistic theology. In recent years however, the thesis that Puritanism originated at a much earlier period has been advocated.¹ Knappen's Tudor Puritanism devotes many pages to demonstrate an earlier origin,² while Trinterud openly states:

Puritanism emerged in Tudor England in the thought and work of men such as William Tyndale, John Frith, John Bale, John Hooper, John Bradford, and their associates.³

In what ways did Frith contribute to the origin of Puritanism in England? Many of the ideas of the Rhineland theologians, Zwingli, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Martyr and Jud are to be found reflected in his writings.

Zwingli and Oecolampadius are mentioned by name, revealing

1. Jordan, The Development of Religious Toleration in England.
2. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism, pp. 3-50.
3. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism" Church History Quarterly, March, 1951.

more than general familiarity. Then too, Frith was a strong predestinarian and ably defended Augustinian doctrine in a controversy with Thomas More in 1532.¹

He was influenced by Augustine's doctrine of the Sacraments, as his works reveal. Frith also defended the judicious use of allegorical exegesis of the Scriptures.

It is significant that although Elizabethan Puritanism was characterized by its rigid doctrine of Sabbatarianism, the early Reformers, such as Frith and Tyndale were anti-Sabbatarianism. The reason for this was their reaction to Catholic Sabbatarianism which allowed no work, amusements or buying and selling on Sundays. The Reformers were unwilling to countenance anything that magnified the authority of the Church. Puritans rejected Christmas and saints' days, and it was no difficult matter to reject the Catholic conception of Sunday. Tyndale, Barnes and Frith agreed in rejecting Catholic observance of Sunday. Frith said that Sundays and other religious festivals were instituted that:

...the people should come together to hear God's word, receive the sacraments, and give God thanks. That done, they may return unto their houses, and do their business as well as any other day. He that thinketh that a man sinneth which worketh on the holy day, if he be weak or ignorant, ought to be better instructed and so to leave his hold.²

This doctrine of the Lord's Day was radically changed in Elizabethan times when the Lord's day was set apart from

1. Frith, op. cit., p. 266f.

2. Ibid., p. 295.

weekdays as a day for religious instruction, rest and meditation only.

In connection with Puritanism it is interesting to note that Frith's treatise, A Myroure, or Glasse to know thy selfe was published with two other Puritan tracts in 1627.¹ The Puritans of that period found much in Frith's works as well as Tyndale's which gives evidence that the later Puritans depended on the earlier writings of Frith and Tyndale.

1. Vox Piscis: or The Boock-fish Contayning Three Treatises which were found in the belly of a cod-fish in Cambridge Market, on Midsummers Eve last, anno Domini 1626.

CONCLUSION

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From this detailed investigation we see a man who, though young in years, was mature in learning and original in thinking. There is no doubt but that his life and writings contributed much to the making of the English Reformation. Traditionalists of both the clergy and lay^{ity} men were forced to defend their inherited doctrines, and this in turn aroused the interests of the common people.

Although Frith did not emerge from Lollard ancestry, it is evident that they, together with the Christian Brethren, were dependent on many of Frith's arguments and writings.

His studies at Eton, Cambridge and Oxford provided the intellectual disciplines which contributed to his success as a writer and controversialist. Of more importance, however, was his theological development, originating under the influence of Erasmus' writings, continuing at the White Horse Inn and in his reforming activities at Oxford.

After his escape to the Continent, Frith not only enjoyed the companionship and learning of men like Tyn-dale, but he engaged in translating reformatory works and refuting the works on the doctrine of purgatory advanced by More, Fisher and Rastel.

On two occasions Frith risked his life by visiting England. Cromwell and the King seemed solicitous towards him and the time was propitious for his return in

1531. Passing from one interested group of brethren to another, Frith was seized and placed in the prison at Reading. After a dramatic interview with the local schoolmaster, Frith embarked for the Continent, only to return in 1532 when he was arrested and placed in the Tower of London.

His last days were the most eventful and fruitful for the Reformation. Thomas More, although retired as Chancellor thought it his duty to engage in a controversy with Frith. Frith's influential little treatise on the Lord's Supper was the result. Other writings occurred in spite of the limitations imposed upon him as a prisoner. When he was tried before the bishops at St. Paul's, he refused to recant his views, and on July 4, 1533 he faced a fiery death.

As an evangelical, he denied the existence of purgatory on the grounds of Scripture, the early Church Fathers and theology. Regarding baptism he rejected the automatic efficacy of the traditionalist theories and the accompanying views of absolute necessity of baptism for salvation. Following Luther and Zwingli, he reinterpreted baptism in relation to its subjective and objective signification. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper was more elaborately considered. His rejection of transubstantiation was followed by a positive statement of the spiritual presence of Christ through faith in the Lord's Supper.

Both his life and thought produced far reaching

effects on the English Reformation. The common people and the Reformers, Cranmer in particular, were influenced by him. The Church of England adopted his views on the Lord's Supper and purgatory in the Thirty-nine Articles and Prayer Book, leaving a lasting monument to Frith's life and thought.

WRITINGS OF JOHN FRITH

Preface to Patrick's Places	c. 1529
Apistle to the Christian Reader.	
The Revelation of Antichrist.(tr. by Frith)	
Antithesis...	1529
A Disputacion of Purgatorye made by John Frith which is deuided in to thre boke.	
The fyrst boke is an answeare unto Rastell	
The seconde boke answereth unto Sir Thomas More.	
The thyrde boke maketh answeare unto my lorde of Rochestre.	1531
A mirrow or glasse to know thy selfe.	1532
An other boke against Rastel named the subsedye or bulwark to his fyrst boke/ made by John Frithe presoner in the Tower.	1532
A boke made by John Frith prisoner in the tower of London answeringe unto Sir Mores lettur which he wrote agenst the first litle treatyse that John Frith made concerninge the sacramente of the body and bloude of Christ...	1533
A myrroure or lokynge glasse wherin you may be- holde the Sacramente of baptisme described.	1533
A Letter which John Frith wrote unto the faith- ful followers of Christ's Gospel.	1533
The Testament of master Wylliam Tracie esquier/ expounded by William Tindell and John Frith.	1535

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The Whole Works of W. Tyndale, John Frith and Doctor Barnes. (edited by J. Foxe)	1572-1573
Works of the English Reformers (edited by Russell)	1831

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